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PORTRAITS AND REFLECTIONS

# PORTRAITS AND REFLECTIONS *By*

STUART HODGSON

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TO

MY WIFE

WHO SO NEARLY NEVER SAW
THE LITTLE BOOK IN WHICH
SHE TOOK SUCH INTEREST

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# PREFACE

BORED with the tedious journey through the Lancashire fog and smoke, the young Frenchman who was with me turned himself about to the clouded window of the railway carriage, and with his long forefinger drew upon it the counterfeit presentment of the huge navvy sitting in front of him. I was leaning over to remonstrate, not so much on the impudence, as on the extreme imprudence of his conduct—for the navvy was of somewhat truculent aspect—when the little mill girl by my side saw the picture upon the window and burst into peal upon peal of shrill laughter. The astounded navvy gazed heavily, first at her, and then at the Frenchman. Then his eye caught the window. "'Ere," he said fiercely, tapping Henri upon the knee, "what you been drawin'?" "Little moment," said Henri, working away feverishly at the window. "But regard then, my good monsieur" —with a successful showman's triumphant gesture—"regard then!" And he displayed upon the window-pane a really very creditable portrait, considering his limited means, of the laughing

mill girl. "Eh!" cried the navvy, gazing with open mouth and eyes, "Eh!" As to the mill girl, she gave one glance at it and fell back, wrapping herself in her shawl; her body shaken with convulsive quiverings, a Lancashire Niobe: for a stranger would have said that she was weeping bitterly.

I have not Henri's artistic finger, and I cannot flatter myself that my pictures upon the window-pane either deserve or will receive the acclaim which greeted his. I recall the incident merely to protect my poor little sketches from the charge of humourless impertinence. They are not an attempt to do again, still less to do better, what others have, in the case of many of my victims, done before. They are merely rough drawings of fellow travellers who have happened for a longer or a shorter time to be in the same compartment with me: with one or two figures seen out of the window as I passed, and for one reason or another catching my interest and attention. It has amused me to draw them: it may amuse others to glance at the results.

The collection is quite arbitrary: it is not in any sense representative. For symmetry's sake, I could wish it were more so. I should like, for instance, to have included more women, but there happened to be few in the compartment. I should like again to have put in more young

men. But here I was in a difficulty. The well-known figures of to-day have nearly all been well-known for a long time. The figures that will be well-known in the future are not known at all to-day. There is a gap between the two, like the starless space in the skies which astronomers call the Coal Sack. And this is true, I believe, of all walks of life alike. In one Oxford college I know, for instance, there is a gap of twenty-one years between the youngest of the old dons and the oldest of the young ones. Doubtless, Nature will take her own measures to fill effectively this vacuum too: but it looks on the face of it as though one of the war bills was only just maturing: as though it is in the next ten or twenty years that we may have to pay in inexperienced immature leadership for the destruction of youthful ability and promise during the war. But I grow serious, and "this," as was said on a far more important occasion, "will never do." "Little moment," please: permit me to blow upon the window. Now then . . .

STUART HODGSON

*"It is one," said he, "who comes from whereabouts I dwelt. His name is Stand-fast; he is certainly a right good pilgrim."*

JOHN BUNYAN.

MANY years ago an enterprising newspaper, inspired by the fact that the King was staying at a local magnate's mansion, despatched its own photographer to the neighbourhood with orders to obtain, by hook or by crook, what journalists call an " exclusive " photograph of His Majesty on the spot. The photographer was an inoffensive pleasant little man, in his private relations lamb-like: but where his art was concerned, a lion. For a photograph, he would dare anything. Years after he stood up in a rocking little boat to photograph a bombardment on the French coast, while the German shells whistled over his head, and his horrified companions crouched dismayed in the bottom.

Arrived at the place, the photographer learned from a servant that the King was walking alone in the grounds: access to which was of course denied. But the artist in him was aroused. He climbed a high wall: clambered into a tree: and

crawled along a projecting bough. Then the fortune which proverbially favours the brave remembered her humble son: the King passed immediately below him when he had been but a few minutes in the tree, and he " snapped " him. The click startled King George, who looked up. " What are you doing there ? " he asked. " Taking your photograph," replied the preoccupied artist. " Come down," commanded the King. The photographer descended gingerly. The King asked him where he came from and how he got into the tree, examined his camera with some attention, and listened gravely to his enthusiastic explanation; and then suddenly " Have you had lunch ? " " No, sir," said the artist. " Then you'd better come and have some," said the King decisively, and carried him off to the house talking photographic " shop " volubly all the way. Only the magnate's face clouded when he found his carefully arranged table upset for so unexpected and surprising a guest. But what the lion wills, the jackal must not resist.

Considering how long he has lived in the full glare of publicity, there are surprisingly few stories of King George. When he came to the throne, a loyal but embarrassed Press found it difficult to manufacture a popular nickname with which to crown the serious, rather imaginative man who had grown up out of the solemn little

boy. It selected "The Sailor King." The choice was justified in the sense that his years at sea in his youth, before the dark shadow of responsibility fell so heavily upon him, and when there still seemed little prospect of his succeeding to the throne, were probably among the happiest in his life. He liked the simple, straightforward sea life. Discipline has never come amiss to his orderly mind. He has a turn for mechanics and the mechanical detail of modern seamanship genuinely interested him. For travel in itself he has never, I think, had his son's passion ; and he dislikes the foreign watering places at which his father was so assiduous a visitor. His State pilgrimages have been undertaken from the laborious sense of duty which is his outstanding characteristic; and the genuine knowledge which he possesses of Imperial as distinct from foreign affairs was acquired painfully in the same serious spirit. A distinguished Indian civilian once told me that he had been astonished to find that the man who knew most about the details of Indian problems among all the English public men he had talked with was the King. But his natural inclination is not to study of this kind; he was happier in his ship life. Not at heart a society man at all, temperamentally shy and naturally blunt in speech, he was probably far more at ease and at home among the sailors than ever he was

afterwards among the courtiers and politicians and lawyers. He made some real friends among them. Like his father, he understood and admired the wisdom of Lord Fisher. Lord Fisher's speech was always racy; it was not infrequently Biblical, for he was a diligent reader of the Bible and a most inveterate sermon taster; but it was rarely decorous. "The worst of you, Fisher," King Edward said to him once "is that you're too violent." "The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by violence," retorted Lord Fisher, "and violent men take it by storm." It was an odd mentor for a budding monarch; but he might have had a much worse.

His life, during the stormy years of his reign, has flowed itself rather curiously calmly and evenly. Some half-dozen great events really sum it up; they compose all that the ordinary Englishman actually knows of the King. They are the sort of events which are printed in black type in books of historical dates, undeniably important, landmarks in the history of the time, and yet somehow faded in retrospect, and not now, in fact, very interesting. It must be rather difficult for this generation to understand why the famous "Wake Up, England" speech which he made when he was Prince of Wales was so famous, or why it excited the hopes and fears which it did. It was important as the first appeal from one in

high place on lines now familiar, but then new and surprising. It is only fair to King George to recognise that he responded with unwearing energy to his own appeal: and that in the movement of which the Liberal Industrial Report is the latest fruit he has played personally a very great part.

His marriage again—overshadowed at the time by the memory of his brother's death—was important in his own life and important in the nation's: for the Queen has played an unusually influential part in the history of this reign. But few records are more pathetically trivial in the memory of succeeding generations than those of bygone weddings, however important in fact and in the result. The Delhi Durbar, the culmination of his Imperial travels, was undeniably an important event in Indian history; and if any ceremonial could live—as the Field of the Cloth of Gold has lived vaguely—by virtue of its mere magnificence, surely this should have done so. For like Solomon's temple it was "exceeding magnifical": even India, the land of magnificence, was astonished: and far-off Balham and Tooting read with bewilderment the gorgeous reports of a display probably never equalled in the history of the world. Yet who thinks now of the Delhi elephants more than of the ivory and apes and peacocks which Solomon's sailors brought him from Ophir?

The seed of the tremendous popularity which has come to King George in his later years was sown in the main, I think, during the War. The position of the British Sovereign in the European catastrophe was extraordinarily delicate. The struggle cut right across his family ties; that was a misfortune common to scores of other families in the various belligerent countries. Everywhere, with very rare exceptions, the monarchs themselves became, by an odd irony, little more than passive spectators of the conflict on which their thrones depended. Once hostilities broke out their power and influence, great or small, faded away and passed inevitably to the real War Lords. The Kaiser himself became a puppet in the hands of his generals. But the peculiarity of the British Sovereign's position was that he was required to embody and represent the spirit of a nation which seemed at times to be at grips with the monarchical principle itself in a struggle which did in the result involve the overthrow and destruction of three great and innumerable small monarchies. It was a good deal to ask of a man proud of the great place which he had worked so hard to justify: no king can reasonably be expected to be really enthusiastic about revolutions. A man of prouder temper might have been tempted to play for his own hand, with results incalculable, but certainly disastrous. A

weaker or more selfish man might have found the situation intolerable, and moped or sulked. King George accepted the position with his usual straightforward single-mindedness. Where he could do anything useful, he did not fail to do it; where there was nothing to be done, and interference could only do harm, he stood aside uncomplainingly. In the main task of embodying with dignity and courage and restraint the spirit of the nation, he succeeded to a degree which a man of far more showy gifts might easily have failed to attain; and the stubborn nation, once or twice more shaken in soul than it was willing to admit, repaid his quiet loyalty with a gratitude which the tragic times afforded no opportunity to express. But the opportunity came.

There have been very few more startling exhibitions of national emotion than the outburst which followed the announcement of King George's illness. I have heard it suggested that the Press was really responsible for the demonstration. There are some people who will dismiss the premonitory symptoms of the Day of Judgment as a Press "stunt." The newspapers can no doubt spread the interest in an interesting event; they can to some extent heighten it. But they cannot make the public care for anything or anyone when in fact it is

indifferent. Countless instances of attempts to do this—all uniform failures—could easily be cited. But there is direct proof, as it happens, that in this particular case the Press was merely echoing the public feeling when it devoted columns upon columns to the King's illness.

A Labour paper, animated presumably by the rather drab Puritanism which inspires an influential section in the councils of Labour, sought to dismiss the fact during the first day or two with a curt paragraph under a small heading. But, as Dr. Johnson used to say, "it would not do." To the public the King's health was the one great topic of the hour, and within a day or two the Labour paper's columns were as full of details on the subject as those of any "Capitalist" organ.

And indeed no event in recent years, setting aside two or three moments in the very crisis of the War, has aroused such earnest and universal public emotion. "Sir," cried the porter to me one night as I returned late to my office from dinner, "the King is dead." The information was false; there was no doubt about the genuineness of the feeling with which it was given. It pervaded every class from the highest to the lowest. The street-sweeper was as anxious as the peer. To a newspaper-seller in the street a friend of mine saw a beggar approach, clad in the

last rags of utter destitution, obviously too poor to afford a paper. "How is he?" whispered the tramp. "Better," replied the other in the same tone.

It was a curiously brilliant evening to a day which began with a grey morning. He came to the throne a rather delicate middle-aged man, comparatively little known to the general public. He had neither his father's commanding presence nor his repute for statecraft. He lacked almost entirely the qualities which romance has associated with the idea of royalty. He had not even the advantage which has been a strong tower to some second-class statesmen of being what is called "a typical Englishman." Except George III., no occupant of the British throne has really been that since the days of the Tudors. Yet by an accident of mind and temper he has proved in a very important sense representative of his time. The War apart, I believe the most material fact in this time will prove in the end to have been the imperceptible but rapid intrusion of the influence of the working-class outlook and ways of thought in British government. It is beginning to extrude the exclusively middle-class ideals of the last century much as the ideals of the middle classes gradually dominated and superseded the purely aristocratic conception of government. Obviously it would be grotesque to speak of

King George as a working man's King. But I think it is true that he comes nearer to that conception than anyone who has ever sat on the British throne. "To what," the preposterous parson in a famous tale asked the stoker, "to what do you ascribe the greatness of the British Navy?" The stoker replied that he did not know: but that so far as he was concerned he did his adjectival job. With a less indecorous bluntness, no doubt, but with the same emphasis, King George would make the same reply to the same question. He and the stoker would be of one mind on the matter: they would understand and appreciate very well each other's point of view: for it would be extremely similar.

It is always difficult to estimate with any accuracy the political power of a constitutional monarch. King George has never shown the jealous regard for his formal right to intermeddle in domestic policy with which Queen Victoria used to try the patience of her Ministers; and though he has not hesitated to use his influence when it seemed possible and desirable in foreign affairs he has not made them, as his father did, his main interest and study in public life. He would probably say that his main work had lain in the effort to consolidate the Empire; and he has done a great deal to help to speed up modern developments in this field. But at least twice during

his reign he has been brought face to face with the sort of crisis in which the remaining powers of the British Crown come really into play. When feeling is running very high, the attitude of the sovereign is inevitably closely watched. He has then a real influence, very dangerous to exercise, but which he can scarcely help exercising in some degree however circumspectly he walk. At the very beginning of his reign King George was confronted with the crisis occasioned by the passing of the Parliament Act. It was perhaps fortunate that the statesman who carried it should have been Mr. Asquith, who looked less like a revolutionary than almost anyone whom it is possible to imagine, and who exercised over the King all through his reign an influence greater than that of any other public man. They had some things in common; the same steady sense of duty, the same cool, rather matter of fact common-sense and the same formal regard for precedents and conventions. King George's main concern in this controversy was to avoid the creation of peers, which is certainly a crude and clumsy expedient. His influence may really have counted for something in bringing to nothing the desperate counsels which would have made this course inevitable.

Once again, fourteen years later, he came near to having thrust upon him a decisive political

decision. If the Labour Government had collapsed immediately, as some people anticipated, the King would have been called upon to decide for whom he should send, Mr. Baldwin again, or Mr. Asquith, as he then was: and the decision might have proved of capital importance in political history. The emergency never arose: but it might have done: in a slightly altered form, it may still.

The monarchy is at the present time in this country undoubtedly popular. The London crowd likes to watch its pageantry; the Englishman in the provinces—and the Englishwoman still more—likes to read about it. The nation generally is vaguely proud of the gallant old ship which has ridden so serenely the waves in which vessels which looked so much more powerful have sunk and disappeared. Old-fashioned Republicanism is dead. Communism sees the face of its tyrant not in the palace but in the board-room and the bank parlour. It might seem that the extreme nervousness with which some official defenders of the monarchy regard its future is exaggerated and baseless. That is not quite so certain. The present popularity of the Crown is based, not on any very profound belief in the value of the institution, but on a sort of atmosphere with which the conduct and moderation and public spirit of its occupants during the

last fifty years have succeeded in investing it. Folly and rashness, aided by a succession of untoward incidents, might easily undo this work, and drag the Crown again into politics with disastrous results. It is not very likely, but it is possible. Even so, the unassuming, laborious work to which King George has throughout his life devoted himself would not have been wasted. For he has done much more than preserve in honour and repute an ancient institution (a thing which may or may not be worth doing): he has made it an effective and valuable instrument in smoothing and stabilising the necessary changes which mark the development of every living nation: a piece of work of which the value is not the less great and undoubted because it cannot be directly assessed.

# MR. LLOYD GEORGE

*" And O, man," he cried in a kind of ecstasy, " am I no a bonny fighter ? "*

STEVENSON.

THE truest thing ever said of him was said by himself quite casually in a speech a year or so ago. " I like people," he told his audience, doubtless with the beaming smile that goes straight to his audience's heart, " to like me." Yet it was not always his master feeling. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, I fancy, in the old days when he might have been held by a casual reader of the daily papers to be the best hated man in the country, and received with a certain impish glee the vials of obloquy which infuriated aristocracy emptied upon his head.

It was not his charm, but his courage, that really made Mr. Lloyd George. The beginning of his greatness was simply the discovery that this David also was the one man in all the Liberal Israel who could meet effectively the Goliath of Birmingham. Those who think that to do that was a little or an easy matter have forgotten or never knew how the House of Commons wilted

and flinched under the steely gaze and the rasping sarcasms of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain in all his glory. There has never been a tyranny at Westminster even remotely resembling it since.

The charm, of course, was always there: the art of using it so incomparably perhaps learnt in the first instance in the solicitor's office of the very early days. The people who sneered at him as "a little Welsh attorney" sneered to their own greater damnation; for if it be a reproach to be a Welsh attorney—I have never understood why it should be—what is to be said of those who, unburdened with this handicap, were yet so immeasurably the Welsh attorney's inferiors in all the arts of public life?

Mr. Lloyd George has in fact a rather unlawyerlike passion for getting the parties together and settling the case out of court. There is nothing necessarily corrupt about the method, as seems sometimes to be suggested absurdly. He has used it occasionally with splendid success—as in the settlement of the 1911 railway strike, a fine piece of public service now almost forgotten. Almost, but not quite. "If Lloyd George had been at the head of things," a miner is reported to have said sullenly during the General Strike, "all this would not have happened." He was quite right. It certainly would not. But there are occasions in politics when the method of com-

promise not only will not work but makes bad worse. The failure of the attempt infuriates the enemy; and the mere fact of the attempt disheartens and dismays friends. That truth could be illustrated more than once in Mr. Lloyd George's strange eventful history.

At the crisis of his fate it was his love of being liked that undid him. His own spell destroyed —for the time being at any rate—the magician himself. The crisis came when the war ended in 1918. If Mr. Lloyd George had then said to his Tory colleagues, "Gentlemen, the war is ended: and the Coalition is ended too. Here our ways part. Now we go our natural roads—you to the right and I to the left"—the whole course of history would have been altered, and immensely for the better. We should have been spared the period of confused meaningless brawling in which we have all been fighting as in a fog through those dreary years, every man's hand against his neighbour: the peace might have been delayed: but it would have been a far better peace. For Mr. Lloyd George himself the decision would have meant immediate defeat: followed within a few years at the latest—perhaps even within a few months—by overwhelming victory. The reasons why he did not adopt this course leap to the eye. There was the practical stateman's reluctance to abandon the helm in a

crisis; to leave his work half done to be spoiled by incompetent hands. There was the wary politician's sense of the danger of such a course, which would have left him exposed to the fury of his late associates as well as the unrelenting hatred of his old party: with no hope or stay but the vague mass of indeterminate public feeling, powerful indeed, but slow to move and often moving only when it is too late. But I do not believe it was either an overpowering sense of duty or any overmastering fear of the danger that really determined his decision, but something quite different and in its way much smaller. To break up the Coalition in this way he must at least have seemed to say to men who had worked with him for years, who had supported him loyally and praised him as hardly any man has ever been praised before: "Now I have done with you. You have served my occasion. Now I am going to use my enormous influence to attack and destroy you." Another man might have said that, but not Mr. Lloyd George. He has a natural comity and good nature, which makes conduct like that, though it be right, almost impossible to him. In wrath, or to persons he dislikes, he can, I believe, be formidably rude: but not in cold blood to people whom he has made to like him. The artist could not find it in his heart to destroy with his own hand his own handiwork;

he liked being liked too much. So he rode on upon the strange steed which had borne him so well in the War, hoping against hope that he could still guide it whither it would not. And he did wonders. He reduced British politics to a kind of nightmare in which the Tories supported a policy which they secretly detested out of regard for the leader whom they had made, and the Liberals opposed and obstructed a policy they secretly admired out of hatred for the man they held to have betrayed them. It was wonderful, but it could not last. The horse bolted and flung him in the dust.

From the dust he has been laboriously raising himself by his courage again rather than by his charm. It is his indomitable courage which is beginning slowly to impress a generation which knows little or nothing of the old ignoble squabbles, and cares less. The political pundits told him not to go to Lancaster where the local magnate had, so to speak, spat in his face. His answer was to go not once, but twice: and to win so resounding a personal victory that even the strangely inveterate malice of *The Times* was silenced. Like Iago, it said no word more: but confined itself to printing the speeches of the most famous orator in the world in small print on a back page. Even in the dust he has remained for foreigners far the greatest name in this country.

They are always asking me what is his real power and what will be his future. But who can tell? "Position," "Composition," "Recomposition," and "Decomposition" are the titles of four brilliant studies by the most brilliant of the younger English painters, Mr. Alan Beeton. They are an admirable summary of post-war politics in this country—a cloud-wrack whose fantastic castles and minarets that seem built for eternity change continually in shape and size and colour before the beholder's eyes. And in the midst shines one star, so much the brighter in the clouded heavens that the others seem by its side small and colourless and faint. His latest campaign has merely shown once more how supremely, even in this age of machinery and organisation, personality still counts. His course may be erratic, and his colour variable: the eyes of all are still upon him; and if the clouds of danger gathered again, as in the war time, about this country there is no doubt whose name would be on all men's lips. By the reluctant confession of his enemies themselves they would cry: "He only is a living man; the rest are moving shadows." Even if it be an epitaph—and the end may be yet far off—it is a proud one.

# MONSIEUR ARISTIDE BRIAND

> "*It is creditable to Charles's temper that, ill as he thought of his species, he never became a misanthrope. He saw little in men but what was hateful. Yet he did not hate them.*"
>
> MACAULAY.

CHRISTIAN names have a trick sometimes of going wrong. One of the most mild-mannered little men I ever knew was called Herod: and one of the physically feeblest Hercules. Certainly an imp, and a rather malicious one, must have whispered the name "Aristide" in the ear of Monsieur and Madame Briand when they gave it to their little son. It is the name, you will doubtless remember, of that unfortunate Athenian whom everybody got so tired of hearing called "The Just." Now, Monsieur Aristide Briand's friends and enemies, and that large body of persons who have been alternately one and the other, have called him at different times an extraordinary variety of names; but I doubt whether anyone ever called him "The Just." Socialists, to be sure, ran to him to be their advocate in his salad days, eager to have the aid of his golden voice and persuasive ways in the courts. But what they were seeking

was a lawyer, not Justice. The two are not identical. The French bourgeoisie cried out in honour of the ex-Socialist, when he beat down the railway strikers' resistance with a ruthless energy which must have made the poor Tsar, if he had had a little more humour, smile in his Winter Palace. But blandly cynical as the Parisian public is, it can scarcely have been M. Briand's justice which it was applauding when it saw him smiting his old colleagues upon the hinder part. The one defence of the imp is that Monsieur Briand himself would probably have approved the name. He is rather impish himself, and it would have jumped with his humour.

Three well-known public men are associated in the popular imagination as belonging to the same type. They are Mr. Lloyd George in England, Dr. Stresemann in Germany, and Monsieur Briand in France. In South Africa General Smuts, rather oddly to European eyes, is held among his own people to be of the same company. To them he is "Slim Jan Smuts." They are all thought to be, like Jonadab, Amnon's friend, "very subtil men."

Externally they differ extraordinarily. Mr. Lloyd George, in these latter days at any rate, is trim to the point of positive dapperness. Dr. Stresemann has the German thoroughness in this matter also: he looks as though he scrubbed

himself all over every day with an astonishingly hard brush. Monsieur Briand, sartorially, is a desolation and a hissing: a sorry jest even to himself. To call him untidy would be quite monstrous flattery. If Monsieur Briand were revealed in a dream to the Editor of the *Tailor and Cutter*, the dreamer would awake screaming: and probably be removed to hospital, seriously ill. And this unkempt exterior is to some extent a reflection of what lies within.

Guy de Maupassant has a suggestion somewhere that the ideas of men have shapes. Some are round, some are pointed, and some are square. The conceit is very applicable to the souls of politicians, perhaps especially of French politicians. Thus it is a calumny of his enemies that Monsieur Poincaré has no soul at all. He has a very small one, like a very clean, very withered nut. Monsieur Clemenceau has a large, gnarled, astonishingly hard soul; Monsieur Herriot's is large too, but fleshy, soft and palpitating. Monsieur Painlevé's is triangular in shape, very clear in outline and slightly roseate in colour. Monsieur Leon Daudet's, on the other hand, is like nothing so much as a spent Catherine wheel, still smouldering and sputtering, and rather evil-smelling. Monsieur Caillaux's soul is small, bright, pointed and very glittering. If you touch it, it will prick you. But Monsieur

Briand's is shapeless; a very forlorn, disconsolate, lost sort of soul. And yet with a certain greatness about it denied, I think, to the others; under happier circumstances, it might have been rather a nice soul.

He is cynical. The adjective is untruly applied to Mr. Lloyd George, who in his heart hates cynicism, as Nonconformists generally do. In a bantering after-dinner conversation he can hold his own, like any other man of the world: few, indeed, better. His actions sometimes look cynical: but that is because he is so mercurial, so liable to drop suddenly something in which he has been interested and pick up with the same enthusiasm some quite different interest. But his outlook is not in the least cynical. He does not like being told that all is vanity: he hates stories with sad endings: and other things being equal, he would rather say himself a pleasant thing than a clever one. Dr. Stresemann, too, can give back a hard glittering jest upon occasion. But he is too busy to be really cynical: he is, rather unexpectedly, widely read and has even, I believe, wistful literary ambitions himself: but if you told him that life was but an empty dream he would probably retort promptly with Teutonic commonsense that it might be so: but that if it was, his life was too full to bother about it. His cynicism, such as it is, arises simply from the

business man's determination to get through with the job: if he cannot do it one way, why then he must try another. But Monsieur Briand's cynicism is a real thing, founded in a deep and rather squalid pessimism. The tired eyes have seen the world, and behold, it is very bad: bad, with all that therein is—not excepting (be just to him) that quite interesting French politician, Monsieur Aristide Briand.

He is certainly unscrupulous in method. Whether he ever really said, as I have heard, " I am the only man who can save France: for I am the only man who is willing to do anything whatever in any conceivable circumstances," the words sum up his attitude, exemplified a hundred times since the famous " great betrayal " when the Socialist in power showed the dismayed ranks of Socialism that his little finger was thicker than Capitalism's loins. It is not certain that he is more unscrupulous than most of his fellows: it may only be that the far greater force of his personality makes him look more unscrupulous than they. He plays the same game, but more vigorously. And like the rest of them, he cannot believe that the game is not the same everywhere, and everywhere played in the same way.

All—or almost all—French politicians suffer from what Bacon calls " The Idol of the Cave."

When Mr. Wilson burst—as he often did—into a modernised American version of the Sermon on the Mount, the horny eyes of Monsieur Clemenceau closed ostentatiously, his hands folded, and he went, with insolent overtness, to sleep. He held it all just wearisome blatant vapouring. Political France has forgotten what Puritanism is like: it does not believe that in the real world there is really any such thing.

The greatness of Monsieur Briand is that in this squalid atmosphere he has retained a surprising width of vision: and, low-spirited as he seems in temper, has pursued it with the strange energy and tenacity which, with all his weariness and disillusion, he does sometimes show. In Nationalist France he is a good European: and he has laboured consistently for the peace of Europe in the face of all difficulties and discouragements. His first great effort ended with the famous game of golf with Mr. Lloyd George, whom all patriotic Frenchmen believed at that time had horns and a tail. His second came near to triumph at Locarno. He may yet succeed, for his tenacity is very great. And surely it says much for a man that thinking so meanly as in his heart he does of mankind, and brought up in a thoroughly corrupt political atmosphere, he should still labour for their good at the cost of

so much ungrateful toil and weariness. One can but guess. But it may be that this publican also goes down to his house justified rather than certain other far more highly reputed public men.

# MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL

> "*And* still *I am the Cat that walks by itself, and all places are alike to me.*"
>
> KIPLING.

HOMER was of the opinion that few men are equal to their fathers, most men inferior to them and very few superior. Mr. Winston Churchill belongs to the last category: for few would now deny that he is a much bigger person than Lord Randolph. Lord Randolph is one of those characters, like Johnson and Jowett, whose reputation vastly exceeds their recorded achievement. The shining personalities of these men impressed their contemporaries, quite apart from what they did: and the rumour of this renown survives to puzzle a posterity which seeks vainly in their actual work for evidence adequate to explain it. It is not there: the greatness was in the men, a kind of personal magnetism. Mr. Churchill has inherited a good deal of this gift of his father's: and his life and career have been both longer and incomparably fuller and more active.

He has inherited much, including the reck-

lessness which ruined Lord Randolph and has more than once come very near to ruining his son. It is said of him that as a boy he was chased by his young cousins to the edge of a certain cliff. "Now we've got you," cried his pursuers. "Have you?" retorted Churchill and threw himself over the cliff. A tree a little way below saved the future Chancellor of the Exchequer from premature destruction. Spiritually at any rate the story is true and could be paralleled more than once in Mr. Churchill's history. More than once he has hurled himself (unfortunately not alone) over the precipice: and always the tree has been there to receive him: though his companions have not always been equally fortunate.

He has inherited other things. He does not look exactly romantic. But that is Nature's fault, not his. For he is. He has in full measure, as his whole career shows, his father's adventurous spirit. And he has also Lord Randolph's tendency to walk by himself, to go his own way regardless of others. You cannot call them lonely spirits, for that implies a wistful if not a tragic consciousness of being alone which it is at least doubtful whether either ever felt. They are simply self-absorbed and, engrossed in their own pursuits, rather indifferent to other people's opinion of them.

Mr. Churchill has twice changed his party. For the ordinary politician even to change once is hazardous. But Mr. Churchill has never been overwhelmed with the storm of obloquy that broke on Peel, on Chamberlain and even on Gladstone as a result of their change of party. His tergiversations provide at most matter for platform gibes. The truth is people realise that to whatever party Mr. Churchill may temporarily belong, he is in it and not of it: he is just there for the time being. He is not exactly unscrupulous, or even an opportunist by conviction like Lord Melchett: he is busy with his own affairs. Whether he has a formal body of political doctrine at all is, I should think, doubtful. Free Trade is the exception and the Liberal gramophones which recite his Free Trade speeches in the market place probably do his reputation as much harm as can be done to it in this sort of way: but perhaps that is not very much. He would himself say that he is a Free Trader still; that the protective taxes so far imposed are very small affairs (which is quite true), but that he holds the principle as firmly as ever, and will resist serious infraction of it, such as the imposition of a duty on steel. That remains to be seen. In the meanwhile, though an illogical, it is not a wholly impossible attitude. There is some self-deception in it: but it can be held seriously, and

there is no particular reason to doubt that Mr. Churchill does hold it seriously.

He is naturally a serious person. An indefatigable worker himself, he is an exacting and, till he has tried his man out, a rather truculent master: but once he is satisfied, he gives his confidence without reserve. He is very loyal to his subordinates and those who work with him: and this in part accounts for the regard and even affection in which he is held by them. But, engrossed himself in his various enterprises, he demands a like interest in them from others. It is this absorbing interest in himself and his work at the moment (combined, of course, with the fact that he is himself a person of extraordinary force of character) which have really invested some of his minor adventures with an importance which they did not intrinsically possess. His proceedings during the South African War were remarkable, but not really important: yet the papers were full of his adventures—how he was taken prisoner, and how he escaped, and how he came up to Smuts exclaiming, "You can't touch me. I'm a journalist." "A journalist!" Smuts rejoined. "You're an Army Corps." Peevish persons grumbled at the publicity given to him and talked of self-advertisement. But I do not think this pettier sort of vanity is in his character. If he assumes that his proceedings

are important, it is not because he particularly wishes to make the public believe them important, but because he honestly thinks they are.

There is a strong strain of humourlessness in him. He can be sparklingly witty, and he is formidable in repartee: but the gods who have given him so much have denied him the power to smile easily at himself. It is a common foible of great men of action—possibly a necessary one. I remember seeing the House of Commons rocking with laughter at an impudently mocking attack by some obscure Radical on Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. Only one man remained sternly unmoved. Bolt upright, white to the lips, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain sat quivering with rage. Mr. Churchill would not fly into a rage if you mocked at him. He would simply be puzzled to understand what you were laughing at.

Mr. Lloyd George was once entertaining himself and his company with a highly melodramatic and obviously facetious account of the outbreak of revolution in London. It was at the time when he was frequently cast for the part of Jack Cade. Alone among the laughing company, Mr. Churchill sat glumly silent. "You don't approve of the idea, Winston?" said Lloyd George, turning quickly to him. "I don't like talk of this kind," said Churchill seriously. "But you would be there, you know," urged the other.

"On a white horse. The Guards would be out, of course." "Yes, yes," said Churchill instantly: and to the amazement of the company he proceeded to explain quite gravely what dispositions he would take in the event of revolutionary disturbances in London.

In a sense, he is born out of due time. Some of his proceedings which seem extravagant now look quite ordinary in a different setting. The Antwerp adventure, when he led a hastily collected host of half-trained men to defend Antwerp against the victorious German army, seemed at the time a grotesque, meaningless intrusion of melodrama into the grim prose of modern war. It is not even yet certain that it was as harebrained as it seemed. But in another age—say the age of Elizabeth and the buccaneers—there would have been nothing particularly remarkable about Mr. Churchill's expedition. Most of the expeditions of those days were of that type.

Similarly, the modern British public were astonished and on the whole irritated when they saw during the Sidney Street episode the Home Secretary himself proceed to intervene personally in a street fight between the police and armed ruffians entrenched in a dwelling house. Mr. Churchill seemed to be playing the buffoon. He was not. He was quite in earnest. His actual suggestions were practical and valuable, the fruit-

ful expedients of a very fertile and resourceful mind. And, again, in mediæval times his personal intervention in the disturbance of the town's peace would have seemed quite natural and quite in order. Mr. Churchill was only a few hundred years behind the times.

He has never been really popular. He reached the depths of his unpopularity after the failure at Gallipoli. If there could have been an election in Lancashire at that time, and Mr. Churchill had been ill-advised enough to stand, he would have been in some peril of being stoned.

His unpopularity is not so easy to explain as it looks. The disasters at Antwerp and the Dardanelles are not the real, or at least not the chief, cause of the popular feeling towards him. If they were, the feeling would be different. It would be hatred, not mere dislike: Mr. Churchill would have been hooted out of public life altogether. But that has not happened. With the cool reasonable tolerance which our public sometimes conspicuously displays, the generality of Englishmen have apparently come to the conclusion that these disastrous adventures were gambles: gambles which failed indeed, but which might have succeeded: and that if the main responsibility for them rests upon Mr. Churchill, there were others consenting to them also and it would not be fair to make him solely

the scapegoat for their miscarriage. So thinking, they do not hate Mr. Churchill: they even tolerate rather indifferently his continuance in high office: but they do not like him.

Yet in private life I believe he is a very likeable man: and his career on paper looks the sort of career that should have dazzled the mob. There can have been few men at any time so brilliant and so versatile. As a soldier he has fought in four continents: and he would certainly have fought in Australia too had there been any fighting to be done there. As a writer, the general level of his extraordinarily varied writings is amazingly high: and his best writing is in its kind almost without rival. Even those who most angrily challenge his figures and dispute his theories acknowledge the spell of his vivid coloured prose. Except the best of Lord Rosebery's, I know no speeches made by men in our time comparable, for the perfection of their form and the purity of their English, with the best of Churchill's.

As Chancellor of the Exchequer he has had no luck. No Chancellor could have produced really popular Budgets in these last years: but it is very doubtful whether any other man would have produced less unpopular Budgets, given the material, than his agile ingenious mind has done. He has other qualities which seem to make for popularity. His sportsmanship should have

endeared him to a sporting nation. His high courage and daring have made him a theme for a crop of stories, largely no doubt apocryphal, but the sort of stories that ordinarily make their hero the admiration of youth. He married one of the loveliest women in all England: and that, one would have supposed, would have been a help. But it has all been no good. Mr. Churchill is not, and never has been, really popular.

The reason, I think, is that he is so palpably odd: and for oddity, for eccentricity, the English people have a queer intolerance. Only one of the really great figures in our political history can fairly be called odd. And the supple intelligence of Benjamin Disraeli knew both how to use his oddity to advantage and how to hide it when it might injure him. He could grasp to a nicety a commonplace popular sentiment: and return the common thing to its authors clothed in his own gorgeous phrases: and the mob laughed delightedly, seeing their own thoughts thus arrayed. But Mr. Churchill seems to have no skill in gauging the popular humour, or even in understanding it: and even if he could, it is doubtful if he could use the knowledge. He is never commonplace. In his tritest and dullest passages there are continual little quirks and turns of phrase, not valuable or important in themselves, but incurably his own. And the man in the

street, reading or hearing them, starts and stares as at an alien thing: he feels the speaker remote from him, a being with whom he has at best broken sympathy.

So long as it was possible to laugh at Mr. Churchill's oddity as at a foible it did him perhaps no great harm. But when the ordinary Englishman perceived that the odd figure hid a personality of tremendous force and power, the laugh died on his lips: the oddity became a formidable, sinister thing. They could forgive him for being so clever: but they cannot forgive him for being so odd. In the narrower world of Westminster the same fortune has attended him. As a young Tory in his salad days, he was too progressive for his Conservative fellows. When he became a Liberal he was a bellicose Imperialist in a party at heart pacifist and interested almost entirely in domestic reforms. And now he is the Free Trade Chancellor of a party becoming every day more passionately protectionist. Roll as it may, this stone can never find its real niche. He is always odd man out. And for that reason the most masterful of men will continue to be the instrument, if the brilliant instrument, of others: and one of the most ambitious men that ever lived be beaten in the race, with all his splendid qualities, by men who in almost every respect are far his inferiors.

# LORD BIRKENHEAD

> "*Every man is as God made him, and many a time much worse.*"
>
> CERVANTES.

SOME time ago I listened to Lord Birkenhead making a most humorous speech upon the disease of the stone; and as I listened I watched steadily the wooden countenance of the toastmaster behind him, that Man in the Iron Mask of our public feasts whom a stern convention forbids to manifest any emotion. Around the speaker the guests rocked and rolled in their seats: at first in silent, and then in open, crowing, merriment. But still the toastmaster gazed before him unmoved. Then the speaker suddenly reached the point of the admirable story he was telling—telling it in his easy nonchalant way: and amid the shouts that followed, I saw a dull flush creep over the toastmaster's face: his lips tightened: his head bent slightly forward. A moment more, and it was all over. The toastmaster was laughing with the rest of us.

It is characteristic of Lord Birkenhead that he

should make a humorous speech on a disease: and equally characteristic that it should be extraordinarily humorous. No other public man of our time has quite so insensitive and coarse a mind; and none irradiates so consistently every subject he touches with so curious a glamour. I have heard people say that he is a man born out of due time, and that his proper place is in the eighteenth century. This seems to me to misunderstand both the eighteenth century and Lord Birkenhead. The eighteenth century would have shrugged its shoulders in its mannered, cultured way at the blunt rudeness of his more insolent onslaughts: not because they are so insolent, but because they are so rude. To do Lord Birkenhead justice, on the other hand, I do not think the eighteenth century would have at all understood or appreciated the one finer thread which seems to run through his strange character —his almost dog-like personal loyalties. It would have raised its eyebrows at the great Minister who could go out of his way to show kindness to a convicted criminal because he had once been his friend: and stared uncomprehendingly at the forlorn figure which arose in the Cabinet when the fate of the Irish Treaty was in the balance, and announced that he at any rate would never betray his pledge to two dead Irishmen. It is one of the greatest of all the many

ironies in our political history that the man who really won Home Rule for Ireland should have been Lord Birkenhead. For two generations passionate patriots and high-minded idealists had been sacrificing their lives in vain for the principle in which they believed: and then the principle triumphed—through the instrumentality of a man who did not really believe in it, and indeed in his heart probably believes in no principle whatever.

Lord Birkenhead has accomplished much. How could he fail to accomplish much? Mr. Shaw at his very best: the late Lord Haldane at his very best: rather doubtfully, Lord Balfour at his very best: these three alone of contemporary figures in British public life seem to me to be intellectually Lord Birkenhead's peers: and I am not sure that he does not slightly overtop them all. His colossal industry has revolutionised our law: his judgments—I speak as a fool in the matter, but I believe most lawyers would agree with me—are marvels of lucidity and learning and penetration. In politics he has been scarcely less effective. He really made the Irish Settlement. He very nearly averted the General Strike. He, and no other, destroyed the Labour Government. The staid Tories the day before the catastrophe had decided solemnly that they could not take the first necessary step to

turning the Government out—which was to vote against their own resolution. Lord Birkenhead heard of the decision late at night. All night long he rushed about, visiting this leader and that till the small hours. Just in time he got another meeting convened and the decision reversed. By next midday the axe was laid to the root of the Labour tree: but it was Lord Birkenhead's iron will and indomitable energy which laid it there.

He has done much. But how much more might he not have done! With one little spark of idealism he might have been, and probably would have been one of the greatest men of all time. But the spark is not there. There is nothing even that looks like it. It may be that the explosion of public anger which followed the famous speech in which he announced that there were "glittering prizes" still waiting to be won by "sharp swords" was in a sense exaggerated and unfair. Perhaps he really meant it, as he said afterwards, as a warning, and not as an incitement. But how then came it to be taken by the entire public—not excepting the *Morning Post*—in the worse sense? The answer is that Lord Birkenhead's whole career justifies the assumption that the "glittering prize" in the most material sense is the constant object of his endeavours. His latest translation merely con-

firms this impression. Conceivably Cabinet Ministers' salaries may be too low. They are not, and have never been intended to be, "glittering prizes" in the financial sense. The assumption hitherto has been that the honour of high place in the service of his country should be sufficient to induce even an ambitious man of reasonable public spirit to forego the material rewards which finance and commerce and industry offer to their servants. Most of our distinguished political leaders have in the past been, relatively speaking, poor men. There is no reason why they should be rich. They have a just title to ask that they shall be freed from the anxieties and worries which attend positive poverty in the discharge of their public duties: but they can hardly with dignity claim as a right more than such a reasonable competence. It is an instance of a clever man's curious lack of imagination that Lord Birkenhead should declare publicly that £5,000 a year, regarded as such a competence, is ridiculously inadequate. The statement served as the text of an indignant tirade delivered to all and sundry in my railway carriage the other night by a portly red-faced gentleman: no Socialist or other scandalous disturber of the public peace: but one of those thousands of middle-class heads of families, staunch Conservatives and the very backbone of Lord Birkenhead's party, who

struggle not wholly unsuccessfully to live and bring up their children on incomes not a fifth, and sometimes not much more than a tenth, of that on which Lord Birkenhead finds it so impossible to live.

Lord Birkenhead's spiritual home is not the eighteenth century: but I am not at all sure that it is not the seventeenth. Intellectually he would have towered above the Rochesters and the Wycherleys and the Dr. Grammonts and the rest of the hard, cynical crowd who have made the Restoration period a by-word and a hissing: but spiritually he would have understood them very well.

Of all the great figures of our time, there is none whose greatness is so exclusively and entirely intellectual. Take his real ability away from Mr. Baldwin, and in appearance at least little will seem to be lost; he will still be the "Good Mr. Baldwin" of the old ladies' tea parties. Take his quick wits from Mr. Lloyd George, and there will still be much left—his Welsh patriotism, his instinctive sympathy with the under-dog, the lively emotion which makes his best speeches the shining, gleaming things they are. Even Mr. Churchill, deprived of his brilliant intelligence, would still be a very odd figure: a man at whom you would certainly turn to look in the street. But rob Lord Birkenhead

of his splendid intellect and nothing remains: nothing but Low's cartoon of him—the man about town with the top hat set rakishly on the back of his head and the fat cigar arrogantly tilted.

# MR. HENRY FORD

"*He thus became immensely rich*
(*Immensely rich, immensely rich*)."

BELLOC.

OLD William the Lancashire cotton spinner (or so they fable in Lancashire) never broke his thread. They watched him to see why not, and found nothing. They haled him before the directors. "William," said the directors, "they tell us thy thread never breaks. Why?" William regards them from under his drooping lids, and says nothing. "What dost want for thy secret?" demands the chairman gruffly. Something the directors will never grant. Let it be stated, then; and stated it is. A mug of ale every day of his life so long as he shall live; that is what William wants. Good; it is granted. The mug of ale is assured. And now—thy secret, William? And William reveals his secret in four words. He wets his thread. With such homely birth throes (or so they fable) emerges one of the great discoveries of one of the greatest of British industries. The inventor? He stands before you. A gross, ignorant,

suspicious boor: his dull mind lighted only by one shrewd, jealously-guarded idea. The rest is—beer.

It is curious how determined mankind is to believe that the men who have greatly changed its fortunes or its conditions are themselves of necessity great. History will have none of the idea. She says that the captains of the northern savages who overthrew the Old Roman civilisation were themselves, with the rarest exceptions, mere savages; that the poor monk who changed the history of the world by defying the Pope was just a poor monk, with none of the qualities of greatness but bull courage and complete sincerity: that the conquerors of the New World were, again with rare exceptions, ignorant, brutal soldiers of fortune. Everyday experience is in the same tale. I knew a man eminent in his profession—and is not the experience common? —who was yet, as a schoolboy, the jest and butt of his companions; and except in one sphere only seemed to the end of his life, what indeed he was, a very silly fellow.

Mr. Ford is not a silly fellow; he is a quiet, modest American; a singularly grey, faint, withdrawn personality. All lunch he sat almost entirely silent. Once only he lifted his quiet eyes. "You have not a car of that make? I will have one sent you." There was a certain

distinction in this proceeding; not in the gift itself, princely as that was, but in the unaffected air with which it was given: with such indifferent good humour one might offer the latest gadget in mechanical lighters to an admiring friend. This grace in giving then Mr. Ford has; it is not altogether common among rich men. But what does his silence mean? Charity cries, the natural modesty of a foreigner in strange company, some of it rather distinguished. Suspicion whispers, the guarded caution of a man lost among ideas and talk utterly strange to him—a castaway in an unknown country to which all the motor cars he has ever built have never carried him, and never can.

The story of Mr. Ford's life is part of American history now. Every American schoolboy knows the tale of the farmer's son who would waste his time repairing clocks and playing with mechanical toys: how his father, to wean him from his profitless follies, gave him a forty-acre field ; and how he promptly sold the forty-acre field and devoted the profits to his mechanical experiments. The schoolboy knows, too, how when young Ford, after a period of squalid struggle, eventually got a job at a modest salary the exasperated foreman told him that he must choose between the job and his "gasoline lorry," which was a noxious offence to his quiet fellow citizens: and how Ford

at once abandoned the job to devote himself to the lorry, the unsightly evil-smelling progenitor of all cheap motor cars. These pages in his life are curiously familiar: they can be paralleled from the early history of almost any mechanical inventor. Mr. Samuel Smiles, if he knows about them, must chuckle approvingly in the dark. They are the sort of story which has hardened the popular belief that every one-idead boy, obstinate enough to defy his parents and outbrave public derision, will probably prove a genius. Of the hundreds of such boys whom every generation throws up one or two no doubt do. Of the rest, most die: for Nature is sometimes kind in her cruelty. The survivors you may sometimes meet, sad-eyed, out-at-heels, despondent visionaries, the object of the irritated pity of their relatives and friends: all that is left of the resolute boys who tried to perform the miracle which Mr. Ford performed (perhaps with not less ingenuity and not less courage); and there was something wrong with the spell. The miracle never came off.

For his great fortune Mr. Ford is indeed indebted hardly at all to his inventive faculty. He owes it to the commercial ability which he possesses in conjunction with it (a most rare combination). Of this faculty, too, the stories are on the lips of all his admiring fellow countrymen.

They tell how when a railway company would not sell him land which he needed except at a most extravagant price, Mr. Ford retorted by buying the railway company itself: and how when the Wall Street financial magnates would not advance him the money he wanted, he raised it for himself by a system of advanced sales—raised more than he wanted, and left Wall Street gaping helplessly. This is the same reckless courage displayed in another field; when it succeeds, it is called genius and held up as a model for aspiring youth: when it fails (as it generally does) it is justly set down as madness and soon forgotten by all men. But Mr. Ford is right in imputing to courage and resolution the source of his success. Physiognomy is a rather deceitful guide. One meets not infrequently the man who looks like nothing but the "portrait of a blinking idiot": who yet turns out on trial a man of high capacity and remarkable quality at least in some one art or craft of his own. Still more frequently one meets the man of noble and even magnificent exterior: who proves in fact to be something not very far removed from the blinking idiot himself. But Mr. Ford's looks do not belie him: the clear, cold blue eyes, the mouth like a trap, even the whimsical poise of the head, all have their message for the observant, and the message is true.

Mr. Ford has done two things. His keen

alert mind discerned the immense possibilities hid in the subdivision of labour, especially as applied to the production and assembly of motor cars. And his energy and business capacity exploited his discovery to the uttermost. In doing so he changed the habits, almost the character, of his countrymen: he modified profoundly the whole surface of civilised life all over the world; and he became himself incidentally fabulously rich—so rich that he can scarcely know how rich he really is.

Had Mr. Ford been a great man he would have perceived not the greatness of his achievement (which anyone can see), but its limitations. He would have seen that the immense success which his principle achieved in the motor industry could not be achieved on the same scale in other industries and in other countries. He would have realised that with the great benefits which undoubtedly flowed from it, there were also some undoubted evils and some very grave dangers. He would have understood that high wages are a dubious benefit if they be not accompanied by opportunities for wise spending. He might even have been led to reflect that autocracy in business is subject to exactly the same objections to which all good Americans know it to be subject in other spheres of life.

But Mr. Ford was not a very great man. He

was only an honest, rather simple-minded American citizen. He was blinded, surely not unnaturally, by his unheard-of success, and led to believe and to proclaim that he had found the philosopher's stone in industry. Others, with less excuse, shrieked from the house-tops that he had found it. Now the defects and limitations of Detroitism are becoming more evident than its advantages; and the disillusioned public is showing some tendency to pelt the philosopher with his own stone.

Except in its colossal scale, Mr. Ford's triumph is not really as exceptional as at sight it seems. He has risen, it is true, from almost nothing to be one of the richest men in the world. But on a more modest scale the same thing happened in the cotton boom of the seventies in this country: as it has happened doubtless elsewhere at other times. Then too men of character and insight and energy seized the opportunity which the accident of the time offered them; and their genius lifted them up from the little brick workingmen's cottages in which they dwelt and set them to live, enormously rich and rather lonely, in great stone houses. Like them, Mr. Ford has developed certain eccentricities of character, doubtless the result of his giddy change of fortune. His Peace Ship came near to making him the laughing stock of the world: and there are other stories

told of him which illustrate the same strain of mere oddity. It is said, for instance, that he once objected to a certain counting-house department in his vast works as a mere waste of time and money. For some reason no notice was taken of his protest; and one morning early Mr. Ford appeared with a gang of workmen armed with axes and hammers and smashed the desks and generally knocked the counting house to pieces. Let the gaping clerks proceed after that with their useless labours if they could. The tale seems at variance with Mr. Ford's apparently quiet, sensible character: but it is extraordinarily like some of the stories that were told of the more eccentric "originals" among the Lancashire cotton lords of the seventies.

On his own life history Mr. Ford is interesting. How could he be otherwise? It is the modern fairy tale, a little soiled and grimy by its closer contact with realities, but still fascinating. On his work too he is interesting, as every intelligent man is when he talks of the things which he understands. As a philosopher I find him frankly a little fatiguing. I have just been reading his account of his religion published in an English Sunday paper. Mr. Ford believes, it appears, in a Great Spirit. So, if I am not misinformed, do certain of the more backward African tribes: so does my baby, building brick

castles at my feet here: and knows just as much and just as little about Him as Mr. Ford. He holds that man is not like a motor car and that he " will not be wholly scrapped." Horace, two thousand years ago, came to the same conclusion, and said that he would not wholly die: which seems simpler and on the whole more poetical than Mr. Ford's image. He has a gambler's and a child's belief in himself as the agent of a higher power: but he believes in reincarnation. Why? Irony of ironies, because he has not time enough to do his work in this life. I suppose Mr. Ford has saved more time than any man that ever lived. I suppose if the hours that he has saved himself and millions of his fellows by the popularisation of the cheap motor car were collected and added together they would represent a total which would run certainly into hundreds of years; and yet he has not time enough. Will he have time then in his new life? No. Mr. Ford himself recognises that. In the life after, then? Not so. He will never really catch up with time, and he knows it. I recognise a certain pathos as well as a certain humour in the situation. What I do not clearly understand is for what reason, if that be so, he should bother to be reincarnated at all.

# MR. ROBERT LYND

*"A deal of Ariel, just a touch of Puck,*
*And something of the Shorter Catechist."*

HENLEY.

GOD," said Mr. Lynd to me one day, "never laughs." "In that case," said I, "He is not God." "Oh, yes, He is," said Lynd. "He can laugh, but He won't. All laughter is cruel." And yet I doubt whether Lynd's melancholy philosophy, well as it sorts with his wistful melancholy exterior, is quite real. If he does not laugh often, he very often smiles: and this is fortunate, for his smile is exceedingly charming. I have a suspicion that he enjoys such cakes and ale as come his way quite as well as another. He likes books: he likes wine: he likes company and good talk. I do not think he could honestly be described as an unhappy man.

His writings are not so introspective as at first glance they appear. If he analyses, it is the fugitive feelings rather than the deep thoughts of the heart that are his subjects. Of the two great rough divisions among writers, those who spin their works like spiders out of their own insides

and those who build them up like birds out of collected scraps of experience and observation, Lynd, despite appearances, belongs quite definitely to the latter. The smooth grace of his even style hides the fact a little: but the basis of his work is a most keen alert observation, unexpected in one who looks so languid. He is an admirable reporter, in the high sense (which ought to be the general sense): he sees things and relations and contrasts with a surprising clearness and he can describe what he sees as clearly as he sees it. His " Battle of Footerloo " —the description of the first Cup Final played at Wembley, which proved a scene of such admired disorder—is one of the most brilliant pieces of what is technically called " straight " reporting done in our day. It is not decorative, if by decorative you mean (as you ought to mean) embellished with extraneous imagery. It is just a description of what happened by an exceedingly acute observer.

This is his best, and indeed his normal method. If he were given the opportunity to report the Day of Judgment Lynd would produce an account in manner, though not in temper, rather like France's description of the French Revolution in " Les Dieux ont Soif." Lynd himself criticised this book on the ground that the author could not conceive a man possessed by a devil,

but only by an imp. But neither can he: and both are justified by experience. Men possessed by real devils are very scarce, and the few that appear in each generation are with very rare exception killed or locked up in madhouses by their indignant fellows. But men possessed by imps are very common: they are not formidable enough to be killed and not mad enough to be certifiable: and being, under the impish impulsion, original and restless and untrammelled by scruples, they make a large part of history, of which sane quiet people are merely the stuff and the victims.

It is his delicate sense of contrasts which points the wit—a very amiable wit—that shines out so often in the sketches which Lynd contributes to the *New Statesman* under the pseudonym of "Y. Y." And it is an important element in his work as a literary critic. To take one instance only, how many people have remarked that the noble passage with which Pepys' Diary ends—"for this and for all the other discomforts that must accompany my being blind the good God prepare me"—is preceded immediately by a regretful reference to his "Amours to Deb" and a suggestion that there may yet be more "amours" in other quarters even if "they cannot be much"? Lynd's view of Pepys is too hard: the diarist's coarse-

ness revolts the fastidious essayist overmuch. But this juxtaposition is of capital importance in any estimate of Pepys, even if there be some exaggeration in the conclusion drawn—"the godliest and most lecherous of men."

It is a rare kind of intellectual sympathy that gives its distinction to Lynd's observation, and marks it off from that of other men equally well endowed perhaps with the power itself. I say intellectual sympathy, for it is not (except possibly in the case of birds) a particularly emotional sympathy. He is never in the least maudlin. But he has the faculty of seeing instinctively how the world looks to beings other than himself. The result is a sort of justice: the temper of all his writings is like the mild, cool, equable air of a quiet summer evening.

There are times when this temper seems almost a defect: when the smooth style becomes slightly monotonous and the even fairness a little exasperating: and you long for a storm to disturb the always serene heaven. It is an unreasonable desire, and it cannot be gratified. One of his earlier books, "The Passion of Labour," is a kind of artificial attempt to gratify it: not, to my thinking, very successful: not because the passion is insincere, but simply because the instrument is unsuited to passion: he is not the man to express it.

He has, with all his friendliness to all men—I never heard him say a harsh word of anyone except Lord Carson, and that was followed instantly by a kind of shamefaced apology—a curious detachment. Tell Lynd the story of the spider and the fly with the indignation proper to a friend of the fly, and he will pour over you at once the balm of his gentle, charming sympathy. But overstate your case in your indignation, and he will interject a whimsical word in defence of the spider: and grow extravagant in your anger, and you will soon have him earnestly and insistently stating the spider's case. In part this is just the professional critic's instinctive trimming of the boat: but it is also something a little deeper. The friend of the fly is driven in the end to think in his wrath that Lynd does not really care very much, at any rate in the sense in which he cares, about the fly. Let him add that he does not really care very much about the spider either, and he has hold of one end of the truth.

He is detached as his great compatriot, Mr. Shaw, is detached. The reason why a great multitude of commonplace English folk in their hearts detest Shaw is not because they do not understand him (though that is what they would say themselves) but because they do. They see clearly enough that he does not take seriously certain things which to them are very serious

indeed. They were really furious with him during the War: not because they held him a pro-German, but because they discovered that the half-sensual shuddering with which the average Englishman regards death was to Mr. Shaw unintelligible. And it is the same with his views on life. The cultured Englishman may repeat with his lips

> "'Tis nothing but a moving shadow show
> Whose doorways are alternate night and day."

What his heart is thundering all the time is Longfellow's cliché about the earnestness and seriousness of life. And by life he means the plain facts of life, his wife and his children, his business and his sport, his money and his health. The Irishman or the Russian who tells him that these things are mere phenomena is snortingly cut off from his spiritual communion. The love of God is to him "like roast beef: you can cut and come again." He may pretend to laugh at the image: secretly he thinks it rather a good one. From his earliest youth he is brought up in the private conviction that the apparent is the real, and nothing ever shakes it. We had a dog once that grew old and wheezy and took on the outward semblance of a pig. I still sometimes hear the piping eager child's voice that I heard over the fence one day as I worked in the garden crying, "But it *is* a pig, mummy: it *is* a pig."

There speaks the real accent of England: you never catch it in Lynd's writing.

The odd hard strain which runs through his gentle character, is, I think, simply the product of early Puritan upbringing. He startled and a little shocked his English friends by defending as war-like acts what seemed to the ordinary Englishman the mere murders with which the Irish retorted on the Black and Tans. But when they took to cutting off the hair of their girls who had been seen in company with British soldiers, Lynd was cut to the heart. And I have known him stuttering with anger at the bare idea that an actress is liable on the stage to be really kissed by an actor who may be a relative stranger to her. Now it is certainly a violent and improper thing to do to cut off the hair of a lady of whose conduct you do not happen to approve: and I suppose a quite sensible woman may find the prospect of indiscriminate caresses by unknown males one of the minor evils in an actress's life. But in a world in which such much worse things are continually happening, is it worth while making a pother about these ?

He really cares about Ireland. If she only knew it, she owes more to his gentle insistent advocacy than to all the violences of her more robust sons. He cares too about books. And here the less fortunate journalist can only look

with envy on the harvest which he is reaping. That he has much influence with the great army of newspaper readers whom the late Mr. Kennedy Jones described as "them as can hardly read" I should doubt. He is too allusive, too bookish altogether. Perhaps the little band of experts also may sometimes shrug their shoulders impatiently at his mild generalisations, for all the wit which flashes in them from time to time and the wide reading which illumines them. But to the great and growing host which sit without in the Court of the Gentiles of the Temple of Literature, eagerly desirous to know and painfully convinced of their ignorance—to these Lynd is an almost ideal guide: a gentle, friendly, wise presence walking by their side in the shadows. His detachment is here a gain: for it is a wise rule which has ordained that the face of the spiritual guide shall not be seen.

> "*Harmoniously uniting as it does the curious, the beautiful and the true, chess appears to be in a permanent relation to the innate susceptibilities of the human intelligence.*"
>
> JAMES MASON.

THE rotund vacuity, the meaningless magnificence of the sentence I have prefixed to this sketch have always pleased me. Surely it would be difficult to find another example of nothing said in quite so grand a way. But for some chess-players words clothed in fine raiment, so to speak, seem to have a natural attraction. Dr. Lasker, the old world champion, is rather fond of trying to prove that chess is like life. I will prove to you that it is like green cheese. It is usually an acquired taste: and so is green cheese. To enjoy it thoroughly, leisure and some concentration are necessary: that is the case with green cheese. People who like chess, love it: and people who don't simply cannot away with it: could the parallel be closer? My arguments are neither better nor worse than Lasker's: and the real answer to both of us is that of the noble captain of the *Pinafore*:

> "Though not naturally clever,
> I could talk like that for ever."

But though chess is not in the least like life, the history of chess is a part of life. In this little creek also the great tide ebbs and flows. Here too the influences which are so marked elsewhere can be traced clearly. The giants are gone, or seem to be gone: what I personally regret more, the old quaint Bohemianism seems to be passing away. Poor Pillsbury with his endless green cigars is a memory now. Only once and again in his book can you catch the twinkle in old Blackburne's eyes, as he gazed down at you, like a genial Jinn, from his great height—as in the note about the gentleman who offered him a draw because he wanted to catch a train. "And now the gentleman can catch his train" he remarks cheerfully, as he mates him four moves later. That gorgeous eccentric, H. E. Bird, thunders now in his book only. "On no account play a Sicilian," his advisers urged him in an important tournament. "In the first game of the tournament I played a Sicilian against so redoubtable an opponent as Gunsberg, and I won."

There may be a revival of course. Julius Breyer (whose praise is in Réti's work) looked promising. He published a paper called "Sport of the Mind," one feature of which was a love-letter with every letter transposed. He could and did play twenty-four boards blindfold: and he is the annotator of the famous game over which

chess players all over the world have chuckled (for they do chuckle, though the unlearned will not believe it). Let me set it out for you.

| White | Black |
|---|---|
| P–K 4 | |

"White's game is now fatally compromised." Yes, there was certainly much to be hoped from Julius. But alas! That hope too is quenched. He died in 1921.

Not that the leaders of the chess world to-day are uninteresting men. Far from it. They are many of them extraordinary and most of them very attractive characters. But, with rare exceptions, they are so respectable, so sedate. And the most sedate of all is the great figure who till so very recently was the headstone in our corner. Señor Capablanca was a sedate little boy. That is evident even in the story which he tells of his precocious chess infancy, the most wonderful chess story in the world. He was not yet five, and was watching his father play. "As I looked on, my father, a very poor beginner, moved a knight from a white square to another white square. His opponent, apparently not a better player, did not notice it. My father won, and I proceeded to call him a cheat and to laugh. After a little wrangle, during which I was nearly turned out of the room, I showed my father what he had done. He asked me how and what I knew about

chess? I answered that I could beat him: he said that was impossible considering that I could not even set the pieces correctly. We tried conclusions, and I won."

Before he was thirteen he had beaten all the Cuban players: at twenty he beat the American champion Marshall: in 1921 he at last after a ten years' chase hunted down Lasker, and his reign as champion of the world began. It has been less long than one anticipated: but there can hardly have been any such undisputed mastery in the history of chess. He inspired while he reigned a kind of awe: the lesser players no more thought of beating him than a man would think of wrestling successfully with a bear. He carried technique to a point which seemed to put him in a class by himself. It would be an exaggeration to say he never lost a game: but he lost so very rarely that he enjoyed all the repute of complete invincibility. And this, as I say, sedately and without apparent effort. Sometimes he would not touch a board for weeks: and then enter untrained upon a first-class tournament and win it.

Whether this sedate autocracy was really beneficial to chess generally is doubtful. Capablanca's chess is beautiful, but even at its best it is the beauty of the unerring, magnificently efficient machine. Our Jove hurled no thunder-

bolts: the sky was always a serene unchanging blue: so that occasionally even Bird's grotesque irregular lightning flashes seemed, in the great monotony of never-ending queen's pawn openings, things to be desired. Indeed Jove himself nodded at last, so drowsy was the time. Señor Capablanca has taken to saying that chess is too easy and that the result of a meeting between really first-class players must always be a draw. The answer to that suggestion is really furnished by an incident in quite another field. "I suppose Napoleon himself could have done no more than this," sighed Mr. Lloyd George surveying a section of the French trenches during the war. "I think," replied Marshal Foch gently, "that Napoleon would probably have thought of something else to do."

The end came suddenly. Cuba, elated by her great son's triumph, blew a trumpet and proclaimed him Envoy Extraordinary on her behalf to everywhere. But the old Greeks had a fable that a cold-eyed jealous goddess watches ever the footsteps of the great as they go; and when her hour is come, Nemesis strikes. The sound of the Cuban trumpet must have been too much for Nemesis. Capablanca had gone to New York to play Alekhine, the brilliant Russian whose piercing blue eyes seem to bore right through you (though in reality he is very short-sighted).

Alekhine is a fine player and far the best living chess annotator, in my humble opinion, in the world. But hardly anyone really expected him to win: and indeed in his one attempt at the new tactics he was ignominiously beaten. But then he sat down to play his enemy at his own game: and the miracle happened. Alekhine won. The Invincible was beaten. Exactly why it happened has not been really explained. But I suspect light is thrown upon it by an incident which occurred during the long gruelling contest. The unfeeling world roared with laughter when it learnt that during one of Alekhine's long meditations Capablanca had fallen asleep and had to be awoken forcibly when his turn came. But any man who has ever played even one hard-fought four-hour chess match will not be much disposed to laugh at that incident. Perhaps Capablanca is right in his theory that modern master chess is a young man's game and in its way as exacting and strenuous as athletics. Perhaps he could not afford the two years' difference in age which he had to concede to his opponent. If so, there will be no return from Elba for this Napoleon: or the Restoration, if there be one, will be short.

The calm sedate mannerly young man has always been popular. The one thing alleged against him has been that common vice of all potentates—vanity. And it must be conceded

that there are passages in his works which give colour to that accusation. Yet, in fairness, consider his defence:—

"Conceit I consider a foolish thing: but more foolish still is that false modesty that vainly attempts to reveal that which all facts tend to prove."

Sedate, you observe, to the last. When, many years hence, let us hope, the Spirit that is really invincible makes her final move and declares mate in one, I fancy the calm steady eyes will look into hers with the same cool, mannerly stoicism, still accepting sedately "that which all facts tend to prove."

# SIR AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

*"He holds him with his glittering eye . . ."*
COLERIDGE.

"WHO is that fierce-looking gentleman," whispered a foreign visitor to a friend of mine in the Gallery years ago, "And why is he so angry?" "He is not angry," replied the other. "He always looks like that. It is Mr. Austen Chamberlain."

Quite another Sir Austen is painted by some who know him well. They will not allow even that he lacks humour and cite a story which he told the House of Commons very late one night. The debate, he said, reminded him of an incident in Seville in the Middle Ages. A Jew was to be burnt and all Seville thronged to see it. At the last moment the rumour spread that he had recanted: immediately afterwards he appeared: and from the waiting crowd there rose a cry never heard before in Catholic Seville—"Stand fast, Moses." It is certainly not the sort of story that you would expect the Sir Austen of popular legend to tell.

It is probable that his apparent fierceness and arrogance, in so far as they are not just a trick caught from his father, are a shy, nervous man's attempt to protect himself from the world that is too much with him. They have done him a great disservice, especially with journalists. And assuredly he carries them very far. He addressed a crowd of journalists at the Paris Embassy some time ago, and spoke at some length in French. At question time one unfortunate journalist, who had no French, put an inquiry to him in English. Sir Austen fixed him with his glittering eye. "Parlez francais, Monsieur!" he cried, "parlez francais!" Yet is it not a little hard that a man may not speak his own language in his own Embassy, especially if he know no other?

He is certainly a remarkably honest man, in the strictest sense of the term. He will face the facts, if he knows them, whatever they be. For the apostle of Tariff "Reform," for instance, what an astonishing confession was that which he made in 1922:—

"It would seem to me perfect madness to think that in a world so altered from that in which we were acting before the War—in a world where what you want is not to defend yourself against competition, but to find any one who is in a position to purchase your goods and to place orders with you—and with a country that has smarted and very naturally smarted under the evil effects of those Government controls and interferences in industry unavoidable in war, but have

proved a great source of difficulty to us both in their existence and in the necessity to get rid of them since the War concluded —in such a world and in such a country to go out with the old programme of Tariff 'Reform' at this time seems to me perfect madness."

Both the shambling, spavined English and the dry, matter-of-fact thought embedded in it are thoroughly typical of Sir Austen. It must be said to his credit that there is no Pharisaism in his uprightness. He is upright with the same sort of unconsciousness with which decent people are clean, because it is the obvious thing to be. There was no reason why he should have clung as he did to Mr. Lloyd George when the Coalition broke up. No real principle was involved. He did it for his oath's sake, like Herod, who may also not have been quite so bad as he is sometimes painted.

But even here Sir Austen has no luck: the very dryness and hardness of his honesty causes him to be widely regarded as a sort of sea-green incorruptible. It is imputed to lack of imagination. The tremendous triumph which he enjoyed after Locarno was a sort of recoil from the low esteem in which intellectually he had been held. A prophet is without honour in his own country as a rule because his countrymen are secretly jealous of him; in their heart of hearts they have at least a suspicion that he is a prophet, but they

prefer to think him a madman instead. But Sir Austen as a prophet filled his countrymen with mere amazement. The idea had never occurred to them.

To this day I have never been able to make up my mind how much credit is really due to him for Locarno. German witnesses, who could scarcely be supposed to be friendly to him on other grounds, have told me emphatically that the feather really was his own: and that without the friendly intervention of the courteous, disinterested English gentleman, agreement would have been impossible. Other witnesses on the other hand assert no less roundly that his *rôle* was purely passive: that he was little more than Mr. Kipling's " bloomin' idol made o' mud " to which for their own secret purposes Monsieur Briand and Dr. Stresemann were content to allow the glory to be paid. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two views: exactly where, may perhaps never be known. And perhaps it will not matter: for the glory of Locarno is departing. The halo is fading so fast that it is becoming indifferent who wears it.

Properly considered, this great man's son seems rather a tragic figure. If he had been a mere nincompoop, if he had failed utterly, like Richard Cromwell, contempt would have swallowed up pity. If he had succeeded, wonder

would have silenced criticism. He has done neither. By sheer dint of industry and character, he has upheld the Chamberlain tradition for a surprisingly long time, considering what castles of sand political traditions usually are. And yet equally certainly he has failed, and failed utterly. Babylon is falling, is falling—that great political Babylon which Mr. Joseph Chamberlain built and in which in the day of his strength no dog dared to bark without his permission. Chamberlainism as a separate political force is in ruins already: and I suspect Sir Austen himself will live long enough to see the absolute end of it and the fall of most of the Birmingham seats.

Babylon is on the whole a city that can very well be spared. I rejoice personally in its disappearance: but it seems fair to regard at least with a certain humorous ruth the man who has so long and so vainly toiled to defend its jerrybuilt walls, not from any selfish personal motive, but because his father reared them.

> *" His glance pierced you through and through, uncovering your very bones. You were worse than naked; you were a skeleton."*
>
> ANATOLE FRANCE.

MR. LOW'S eye always reminds me of a bird's. It has the same not unfriendly, but curiously detached, glance: almost incredibly alert, watchful and keen. A wise worm, if Mr. Low looked at it—and he looks at most things—would, I think, wriggle instinctively, feeling itself raw material: and it would be right. It would be raw material for Mr. Low's never-resting pen: everything he sees is.

He has the true artist's tireless industry and the artist's just pride in his achievement. I forget how many times he told me he had drawn his own face from a looking glass before he was really satisfied; but certainly it was in the thousands. Yet it is not his draughtsmanship that has made him incomparably the first cartoonist of the day, but his insight. The real marvel of his career is the speed and completeness with which, fresh from the Antipodes, he mastered the intricacies of British political life. Experience of Australian

politics cannot have helped him here: they are so utterly different that this knowledge would be a handicap rather than a help. It is true of course that he had help: his colleagues here, realising how formidable an ally had suddenly arisen in their ranks, rushed naturally to press arms into his hands. But Low owes nothing essentially to these borrowings. Genius has no bills : it overpays you in consenting to use your services. His triumph is all his own.

Except " F. C. G." in his palmiest days no cartoonist has exercised such power in politics in this country. He has in the highest degree the cartoonist's gift of seeing the essential weakness of his victim and seeing it without real malice. Hatred has inspired a few brilliant cartoons—like the best of Raemaker's and a few of Teniel's: but it is so fierce a flame that men cannot live long in its light: a cartoonist who had no other inspiration would end by disgusting his public. In the very rare cartoons of Low's in which a real fierceness flames, it is his almost savage sympathy with the poor rather than any personal antipathy which kindles the flame. One of the bitterest cartoons of our time is his parody of Luke Filde's famous picture " The Doctor," which represents Mr. Baldwin sitting by the bedside of the dying child (labelled " Future of the Coal Industry ") while the man (" Unemployed ") looks at him in

the background, his hand on the shoulder of the woman who sits weeping with her head on the table. In Mr. Baldwin's hand is a bottle ostentatiously ticketed "Aspirins." This is savage satire: but legitimate in the sense that it is the miners' sufferings rather than the Government's futility which have really excited the wrath that burns in it. That is clear from the fact that the one mitigation of its ferocity is that the Mr. Baldwin depicted is Low's ordinary comic Baldwin with the pantomime nose. Had the onslaught been really personal, its effectiveness would have been grimly heightened—and so great an artist as Low could not have failed to realise it—by simply on this one occasion drawing Mr. Baldwin as he really is. But personal malice is hardly ever to be discerned in Low's drawings. He handles all his victims with a dispassionate deliberation. He shows you equally coolly the insignificance of Mr. Lloyd George, which is mainly due to his short stature, and of Mr. H. G. Wells, who really is a little man who happens to be a genius; the vulgarity of Mr. Thomas, which is superficial, and the vulgarity of Mr. Arnold Bennett, which is quintessential: the purely physical ugliness of Mr. Baldwin and the almost purely spiritual ugliness of Lord Birkenhead. And he shows you all these with just the touch of exaggeration neces-

sary to fix attention on the weakness; that, and no more.

Most cartoonists have one favourite victim, without whom they are more or less helpless. "F. C. G." drew nothing of real merit after Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's disappearance. Arthur Moreland's cartoons—apart from the historic Chinese Labour one—touch genius only when there appears in the background the little figure of Mr. Jesse Collings. At one time it seemed as if Mr. Lloyd George was destined to be Mr. Low's *sine qua non:* but it has not so proved. He is too industrious and conscientious an artist to be thus enslaved to a single personality. Indeed, I am not sure whether the greatest proof of his real power does not lie in the excellence of some of his allegorical cartoons. These are the supreme test, for with these it is hit or miss. An allegorical cartoon if it is not a bull's eye is a complete failure: there is no scoring an inner or an outer: if the meaning does not at once leap to the eye, it has gone wide altogether. Some of Low's fail like this completely: but some succeed, and they are among his very best work. "The Temple of Mammon," for instance, with Mr. McKenna and the bankers receiving as high priests the adoration of the devout, is brilliant work: so are some of the anti-war allegories: and so is "The Pirate Ship," with the cannibal newspaper

owners devouring each other; though here of course personal observation counts too.

Lord Northcliffe in the days of his decline observed casually in Australia that Low had been a complete failure in England. The phrase was widely reported, but I doubt if it did Mr. Low much harm. It was generally attributed, probably wrongly, to business jealousy. Lord Northcliffe no doubt thought he was stating a fact: and so far as one section of the English public is concerned—the section which Lord Northcliffe himself knew supremely well—I am not quite sure that there was not real substance in the criticism. For admirably as Low's quick intelligence has grasped the mind and atmosphere of political England as a whole, there is one type of English mind which I doubt if he really understands, and I feel sure that it does not understand him. Suburban London intensely dislikes any criticism of the established respectable things of life: it does not stop to ask whether the criticism is just or unjust: it considers it in either case as vulgar and bad form. It is also intensely unsympathetic to anything which looks like tolerance of the subversive or the revolutionary. It is conservative in that sense to the backbone. But Low will leave nothing uncriticised, and his sympathies in his heart are strongly Labour.

There is another gulf between these two. Show a Frenchman, even a rather dull Frenchman, something he does not understand, and he will turn it about and paw it monkey-like, trying to find out what it is. Show a north-country Englishman something not at once intelligible to him and he will stare long and hard at it, trying also in his manner to understand it. Try the experiment on a common type of German and he will listen or watch, uncomprehendingly no doubt, but reverentially: he does not understand, and therefore it is marvellous in his eyes. Not so the average dweller in London's suburbs: from anything not at once clear to him he turns away impatiently: he does not understand it: therefore it is "silly." There is no large population so intellectually impatient: and politically it is not well informed. But Low's work requires some attention to appreciate it fully, and very often it assumes considerable political knowledge. So far as this public is concerned, I think Lord Northcliffe was right. It does not understand Low, and it does not like him. What is in a way more interesting is the probability that Low does not really at all understand it: for once the keen hard bird's eye is at fault. It sees: but in this one case it cannot interpret.

# MR. ALFRED EMMANUEL SMITH

*"Then prostrate fall in the rich man's hall,*
*And cringe at the rich man's door:*
*We're not too low to build the wall,*
*But too low to tread the floor."*

ERNEST CHARLES JONES.

IT is like a strange face seen in the darkness by the light of a match suddenly kindled and as suddenly extinguished: perhaps not so very strange as it seems to wistful memory and baulked imagination: but still very strange. For there could hardly be an odder cradle for greatness than the New York slums: nor a more unpromising nurse for the budding social reformer than the grimy vote-catching machine of Tammany Hall.

Years ago, in the interlude of a dreary revue to which, for his sins, I had dragged him, a mild-eyed melancholy American philosopher told me how, one intolerably hot afternoon, a friend presented himself at his flat in New York accompanied by a weeping Italian girl. She had landed two days before in New York with her husband and two little children. By some accident, for which he was himself not responsible, the man became involved in a street row: and was promptly clubbed and hurried off to gaol by the

energetic American police, leaving his wife and his children, all but penniless, to the mercy of the stony-hearted foreign city. Touched by the tale, the philosopher carried the young woman with him to the houses of one after another of his friends, men and women interested in social reform and influential in municipal affairs. But they were all gone away, fleeing from the frightful heat of New York in high summer. "Well, then," said the exasperated philosopher, "if God's not at home, we must go and see the Devil": and he led his charge through one mean street after another to the shabby little house of Mr. Patrick O'Hannagan, the Tammany sectional organiser. Mr. O'Hannagan also was from home: but he had left an address where he might be found. It turned out to be a squalid saloon, so very dirty and so full of riotous noise, that the philosopher's heart failed him, and he hired one of the loungers at the door to go in and fetch Mr. O'Hannagan out. And Mr. O'Hannagan came out, blinking in the sun: and listened with tipsy gravity to the Italian girl's lamentable tale. "Waal," said Mr. O'Hannagan, "you come round here to-morrow morning and I'll deliver the goods." And he did. When she came round in the morning, her husband was waiting for her.

In such surroundings and suchlike activities—

except that the charges that he was outrageously "wet" in practice seem to be inventions of his enemies—Mr. Alfred Emmanuel Smith passed his political apprenticeship. He climbed slowly the lowlier rungs of the Tammany ladder; the tremendous voice of the fish porter's son was heard only among his own people. Yet even then the strain of originality in him came out: he took to making speeches in favour of social reform which struck an odd incongruous note in the brazen orchestra of Tammany Hall. But he remained comparatively unknown outside his own New York: and his first nomination as a possible Democratic candidate for the Presidency (more than twenty years ago now) was not taken seriously by anyone.

A song made Mr. Alfred Smith. Whether "The Sidewalks of New York" is really a good song I cannot say: for I have never heard it. It sounds promising. But the point about it was that it was Mr. Smith's own song; and it is not everyone who has a song all of his very own. It is the custom of American Conventions when any "favourite son" is proposed for nomination as a candidate for the band to strike up: generally some more or less banal State anthem. But when "Al" Smith, the fish porter's son, was proposed, the band, suddenly inspired, broke out into "East Side, West Side, all around the Town":

and the raucous cheering of the delighted delegates proclaimed that a new prophet had arisen in the American Israel. "East Side, West Side" did not win Mr. Smith the Democratic nomination that time: but it came surprisingly near doing so. It made him a national, as distinct from a local, figure: if still not a figure of the first rank.

There followed the celebrated governorship of New York, which is the real proof of Mr. Smith's remarkable quality. Elected the Democratic Governor of his native State under a Republican administration, Mr. Smith gathered about him probably the most surprising Cabinet that has ever met. Some of its members were old comrades, Tammany Hall officials like himself, invaluable in counsel from their knowledge of the New York underworld. But some were earnest social reformers and intellectuals, who abhorred Tammany and all its works: and some were nondescripts. A very able Jewess and her husband were prominent in Mr. Smith's Cabinet.

So supported, Mr. Smith proceeded to govern New York with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. His government was not merely efficient (Tammany administration often is cynically efficient): on the reluctant confession of his bitterest enemies it was just and upright. And it was also popular: for Mr. Smith was not

only an upright administrator but a very human one. He became, and justly, the "favourite son" of his State in a sense far deeper than attaches usually to the conventional description.

Even so, his selection as Democratic candidate was a kind of political miracle. When the choice was first rumoured, men laughed aloud: when it became clear that the rumour was coming true, they whistled. And certainly no man ever undertook a forlorn adventure so monstrously handicapped as Mr. Smith. He was a Roman Catholic: and he appeared as the champion of the party of which far the strongest wing is as fanatically Protestant as our own Ulstermen. He was a declared "wet"—a moderate opponent, that is to say, of Prohibition: and he appealed to the suffrages of a nation in which the opponents of Prohibition were beginning to say despondently that Prohibition could not be overthrown, and the very "bootleggers" themselves were beginning to see in it the hope and source of their enormous gains. His one strong claim was as a social reformer, justified by works as well as faith. And this champion of social reform was the favourite child of an organisation which for its cynical unblushing corruption stank in the nostrils of social reformers all over the world. If the Democrats had been able to find any other candidate to fight Mr. Hoover with

his great personal prestige and the huge interests massed behind him, they would undoubtedly have done so. But there was no one else in all the ranks of American Democracy who could be relied on even to put up a fight. And that at least it was certain that Mr. Smith would do.

He did. The roar of him, as he rushed about through the vast country torrentially eloquent while his opponent, an odd, rather sinister figure, sat for the most part almost silent, like an idol of High Finance shrouded in the incense of respectability, came right across the Atlantic. One little fact testifies to the power of his personal campaign as almost nothing else would. The majority of the reporters who accompanied him were, when they set out with him on his tour, staunch Republicans. When they returned they were fervid Democrats to a man. A missionary who can convert a reporter can convert anything. I know of no more startling proof of the personal magnetism of Mr. Alfred Smith.

For he is a magnetic personality. The notion that he is a mountebank is just nonsense. In many Englishmen's minds it arises from a real confusion between Mr. Smith, the Governor of New York, and his friend and brother in arms, Mr. Jimmie Walker, the Mayor. Mr. Walker is a mountebank, though a pleasant one. But Mr. Smith in personal converse is rather more than

less dignified than the average American public man. True, he may receive you in his shirt sleeves: so will most well-to-do American business men: and if it is hot, why not? He has not been to school to Tammany for nothing: he can rant and talk claptrap when convenient. But I have heard very eminent citizens in much staider countries than America talking claptrap quite as bad as the worst the fish porter's son ever uttered: and no one thought of calling them mountebanks. At his best Mr. Smith can strike a note as high and dignified as ever Mr. Wilson did: and it is a much more human note. The one spark of truth in the accusation is that in Mr. Smith's mind there are probably vast areas of sheer blank ignorance. He said no word at all of Europe in his election speeches: probably for the admirable reason that he knows nothing at all about Europe. It does not follow that this ignorance, if he had been elected, would have been necessarily an international disaster. Mr. Hoover knows more facts about Europe than any previous occupant of the White House: but it is not certain that he understands Europe any better: and some singularly unscrupulous appeals to the baser side of American sentiment suggest the contrary.

But whether Mr. Smith's entire ignorance, enlightened by his wide humanity, would have

served the world as well as Mr. Hoover's partial knowledge, clouded by his American Imperialism, will never be tested. A song made Mr. Smith: an accent ruined him. This also is, to ordinary Englishmen, puzzling. Certainly he has an accent. He says "foist" instead of "first." He talks, that is, to our ears, a kind of American. But so does Mr. Hoover. And a cultured Englishman who has heard both tells me he prefers Mr. Smith's accent to Mr. Hoover's. But it is a matter of association. To the average American Mr. Hoover's accent is the accent of a gentleman, and Mr. Smith's the accent of the New York gutter. It was a fatal contrast in a democratic country.

Another shadow also fell heavily across Mr. Smith's campaign. The American papers said very little of Mrs. Smith: from which I judge—I think without undue cynicism—that there is not really very much that is actually scandalous to be said about the lady who is known widely in the unfashionable quarters of New York as "Katie Dunn" and who has been for the better part of thirty years the dutiful wife of Mr. Smith, himself a model husband and an affectionate father. But "Katie Dunn" was there, present to the minds of hundreds of thousands of American electors, especially the women electors. She was there much as a certain door in my first

London lodgings was present steadily to my exasperated consciousness. It was pink, with mauve stars in the middle, and round about it ran a little bright yellow line, like the bells and pomegranates that bordered Aaron's priestly garment. It embittered my breakfast coffee and poisoned my bacon: and I used to try and cover it up with screens and anything else that came handy. But the landlady always sternly removed them again. She admired her door of many colours. She liked it. And I hope there are people who like and admire Mrs. Smith : for indeed I can see no real harm in her, poor lady. But to the election hopes of her " Al " she was fatal. Thousands upon thousands of respectable Americans who might conceivably have supported him, would on no account support her. They would not have Mrs. Smith in the White House: and so they would not send Mr. Smith there either.

It is a pity: for he is to the dispassionate onlooker the most interesting figure that has arisen in American politics since Lincoln. Roosevelt with his boisterous manliness has become a rather tiresome cult, a kind of moral Sandow. The figure of Wilson has shrunk strangely since his death: marred, on examination, not so much by the vile slanders of his venomous enemies, as by his own foibles and vanities—foibles so very

enormous that they look like absolute vices. But Smith was not merely a personality: he was a type—the first real champion of the new American democracy. A Democrat lawyer who dined with me a few months before the election had a mouth, like the Beast in the book of Daniel, speaking great things. He prophesied a great rally to his hero of every man that was in debt and every man that was in distress: he saw him carried triumphantly to power by the votes of the Yidd and the Wop, the Nigger and the Chink and the Dago. His hopes were most miserably disappointed. Either the disinherited deserted their champion, or they are less numerous and powerful than the perhaps conscience-stricken imagination of respectable America tends to believe. At any rate, this Lucifer also fell, defeated as no candidate in a Presidential election ever has been defeated before: and Mr. Smith, with his song and his accent and his brown Derby hat, disappeared, presumably for ever, in the angry waters of American respectability. Yet the image of him and the things he stood for remains: the sort of image that the art of Mr. Chaplin has made familiar to us on this side of the Atlantic. It is the image of the penniless immigrant, so resourceful in his helplessness, so comic in his tragic abjection, so shrewd in his monstrous ignorance: and with a strain of queer delicacy

touching with a kind of romance even the squalid misery of his poverty. This is the figure for whom Mr. Alfred Emmanuel Smith fought and fell. Other champions of this cause of the lost may, and doubtless will, arise. I doubt if any will ever arise of greater native ability, courage and sincerity.

# MR. GARVIN

*"It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith it . . ."*

NEHEMIAH.

THE influence of Mr. Garvin is one of the curiosities of modern British journalism. He represents no party, no definite body of opinion, no clique even. It is not certain that he always truly represents himself, for the colour of his weekly reflections is apt to change with the rapid decisive violence with which the shades in a calm sea change as the clouds sail over it on a sunny summer day. Judged by present standards, the public he addresses directly is not very large, and must be rather mixed: and even of the *Observer* readers a very great body would deny emphatically that they ever do more than glance at his formidable looking articles. Yet Mr. Garvin's opinions are widely quoted: and a good many public men attach importance to them, and are pleased or angry or surprised at what Mr. Garvin says. In his way he is certainly a force.

One reason is that he is undoubtedly interesting. You never quite know what Mr. Garvin will say

on any subject: for that reason alone it is always worth looking to see what he has said. Then again he is a most diligent phrase-maker and some of his phrases are very good. His best efforts in this kind touch genius. "Uncle Five Heads" was a glorious name for Lord Northcliffe and his multiple Press. He is rarely so good as that: but even when they are not particularly good, the air with which he produces his "jewels five words long," the "Oh, see what I've made" air of a child happy in its own inventiveness, is engaging and pleasing and gives a zest beyond its worth to the discovery itself. It is a little like a parrot breaking a week's profound silence suddenly with some unexpected and surprising pedantry of speech long meditated. But a parrot is an amusing creature, and its remarks are often extremely apposite. Finally, Mr. Garvin believes profoundly in his own importance: and that is half the battle. Even a dull man can go astonishingly far with nothing but this faith to buoy him up: he can make a surprising number of other people believe it. And a man of ability—and Mr. Garvin of course is a very able man—can go almost anywhere.

He is almost the only remaining editor of the old type. The modern newspaper becomes steadily more and more a news sheet, a thing, not a personality as the old papers all more or less

were: even the weeklies are tending to be just collections of articles whose writers express their independent opinions with an all but complete indifference to the professed opinions and tone of the medium which conveys them to the public. But over the broad pages of the *Observer* there broods an influence so powerful, though vague, that no contributor can quite resist it: not even the irascible rebel spirit of Mr. St. John Ervine himself. Almost alone among the papers of the day the *Observer* is a unity in itself: Mr. Garvin's influence is everywhere. In that sense, he is a very good editor.

Doubtless, there is a slightly comic side to the performance. The editorial "We" brandished so truculently in the reader's face sometimes inspires awe without commanding respect. The Potentate himself is a little funny: he is such a tremendous potentate. All the great ones of the earth are but his puppets, and he deals with all as he pleases. Now it is Mr. Lloyd George—on the whole his favourite—whom he takes out and dusts carefully and sets in a high place: and then in a sudden fit of temper snatches angrily down again and consigns once more to the oblivion of the box. Now he pats Mr. Baldwin on the back for something he has done: and the next week boxes his ears soundly for not having done something else. Then he tells Sir

Herbert Samuel magisterially that he has audited his figures and found them correct. This is really rather entertaining, for of all men in the world Sir Herbert Samuel is perhaps the last who is likely to be wrong in a simple matter of statistics: inaccuracy is not Sir Herbert Samuel's foible. Moreover, by an ironical chance, the Potentate's own figures are, as it happens, on this occasion wrong: though he cannot be got to admit it. Like Sergius in " Arms and the Man " he " never apologises ": indeed every now and again he will turn aside in the course of his huge articles to explain that all his changeful opinions were right—each at the time that they were uttered. However, it is a sin, as Portia says, to be a mocker: and the Potentate, take him for all in all, is not an ungrateful figure in a time when originality and force of character are so rare, and the number of men who " dare to be different " from their fellows diminishes constantly. It is better to be rather ridiculously different, than not to be different at all.

The world has waited so long for Mr. Garvin's " Life of Joseph Chamberlain " that most people have forgotten he is writing it: and now when it does appear the hero will be no more than a name to the mass of Mr. Garvin's readers. The salt has already lost much of its original savour. Yet few books have been more eagerly anticipated,

except perhaps by potential reviewers before whose alarmed eyes there swam visions of a tome like that which Macaulay once reviewed which weighed a formidable number of pounds avoirdupois, and "might have been light reading for Hilpah and Shallum in the days before the Deluge." Yet it will be a great pity if it never appears at all. It is quite possible that externally it may bear some resemblance to the antediluvian volume: but it will contain almost certainly brilliant passages and very likely a great deal that is really important and significant. There is always some wheat embedded in Mr. Garvin's chaff: and often it is very good wheat.

He is an artist in his way. One is tempted at first sight of his long columns stretching out, line upon line and precept upon precept, to believe that if only they were at once cut in two and the remnant drastically revised by a competent sub-editor the result would be immeasurably better. It is not so. I have seen a collection of "Garvinisms" somewhere. The thing was quite competently done: the passages chosen were on the whole the best in the articles in question: but the result was very unsatisfying. The showy epigrams looked strangely dead, like fish on a fishmonger's stall; odd to look at, curious and interesting, some of them in their way beautiful; but how much less interesting and beautiful than

when the creatures swam alive in the living sea! Even so the creatures of Mr. Garvin's invention need the ample sea of his rolling rhetoric for their real worth to be grasped. It may not always seem so: but in reality Mr. Garvin knows very well what he is about.

Also he is a thinker. It would be unjust not to recognise this. He contradicts himself, it is true, very often and very flatly: but his self-contradiction is quite a different thing from the self-contradiction in which a certain type of popular paper is always indulging. This kind of paper will publish an article one day in hot defence of Protection, and another article the very next day in equally hot defence of Free Trade, not because its opinion on the economic question involved has changed miraculously overnight, but because it has no opinion on the issue at all. It is entirely indifferent to economic truth: its attitude on both days is governed by considerations which have nothing to do either with economics or truth. Similarly, it will give wide currency to some palpably incredible tale of misdoing on the part of the German Government and suppress or pervert the slowly extracted official denial; not because it really believes its own absurd story or really disbelieves the obviously sincere denial, but simply because it is not interested in the facts at all, but only

in representing the German Government in a bad light.

The clever men who control such papers are either themselves cynically indifferent to truth or, more probably, believe that the pursuit of it is no part of the work or object of a popular paper. This is possibly a tenable view: but it is certainly not Mr. Garvin's. He is quite passionately interested in the pursuit of truth. His eager, vivid mind sees facet after facet of the truth about any subject and pours it all out pell mell: with results sometimes amusing, sometimes quite valuable, and sometimes, it must be admitted, merely tedious and exhausting. The sad thing is to think what very nothing all this exuberant energy will become once Mr. Garvin too disappears: and how it will all be as if it had never been. But is that to say more than that Mr. Garvin is a journalist, if a fine one, and shares the common lot of all journalists whose work is for the day, and for the day only ?

# CANON STREETER

> "*And sure a righteous zeal inspired*
> *The hand and brain that penned*
> *and planned them,*
> *For all who understood admired,*
> *And some who did not under-*
> *stand them.*"
>
> PRAED.

WHEN Dr. Perceval appointed Dr. Streeter Canon of Hereford, there was a more or less severe storm in the ecclesiastical teacup: with a little more justification, it must be admitted, than usual. For it seems to me that the orthodoxy which is to cover with her skirts his doctrine—I am not discussing the merits, but merely the facts—must have very wide skirts. It would seem to demand a sort of theological crinoline. It is said that a mischievous person once urged one of the bishops to proceed against Streeter for heresy. The bishop replied with true episcopal wisdom rather in the vein of the Executioner in "Alice," who said he could not cut off a head which had no body: he could not prosecute, he said, a heresy which he was himself unable to understand. The reply is a little more subtle than appears: for if Streeter—who values himself, not unjustly, on his lucidity—ever heard it, it must have annoyed him as profoundly as it is possible

to annoy a philosopher: at the same time it freed the bishop from an odious and absurd adventure.

By a most odd chance Streeter himself in his earlier years was pilloried before an astonished public as a persecutor. One of those periodical purges occurred which become necessary at intervals in almost all academic institutions. Some young men had to be "sent down": and the ungrateful task of exorcist fell, owing to his official position at the time, upon Streeter. No one who knows him will believe for a moment that his justice was not tempered with the utmost conceivable charity. But certain of the scribes, who knew not Streeter, could not resist the chance of guying the don. The immediate scandal had been a blasphemous farce: and Streeter accordingly appeared as a heresy-hunting Grand Inquisitor. A real Grand Inquisitor would undoubtedly have sent Streeter himself to the stake after a five minutes' examination: and I do not doubt that Streeter would have gone there with fortitude, arguing all the way. Like most men who do a thing excellently, he has a just reverence for the art in which he excels. At the very last court of all, he will demand, I suspect, the right not merely to state, but to argue, his case. If the appeal is granted, the wisdom of Providence in ordaining that eternity shall be timeless will be at once evident.

Not that he is a bore; far from it. He carries his wide learning with a sort of fantastic ease: and typical don as in some respects he is, his modesty and sincerity make him at home in all companies. It was his joviality, that hid, rather than revealed, the singularly winning graces of his character, which endeared him to us as undergraduates. Dr. Johnson himself cannot have made punch with a more earnest gusto: in most places where men feasted—and they were many in those days—he was a frequent and acceptable guest. I think indeed this side of his character obscured from most of us his real intellectual stature. We imputed his early academic successes to his industry, which was known to be great: and a mild surprise mingled with our congratulations when they became so great that this explanation was no longer possible. But I doubt if his real ability was recognised at its true worth even by those very near him till the publication of "Reality." "Reality" was described by the *Times* as the best philosophic defence of Christianity that has appeared in our time: and the reviewers almost without exception blessed it altogether. It does appear to me, on reading it again lately, one of the most brilliant books of our day: a monument of which any man whatever might be proud. The spirit of Dr. Perceval, if it can still read, must laugh out joyfully at the belated

confirmation of its judgment, so fiercely assailed on earth.

It is an odd thing how arbitrary the scenes are in which the friends of your youth live for you. Why should I so clearly remember the hot room with the windows open on the still summer night in which Streeter expounded so gravely to two or three of us the delicate beauties of the English in the famous epilogue to "Alice in Wonderland?" I do not know, except that a faint grotesqueness in the scene amused my fancy. In another memory he is but a peg to the best impromptu classical quip I ever heard. He was President at the time of the College Debating Society: and I was Vice-President.

"Do you consider yourself capable, sir," asked a questioner one evening when I happened to be in the chair, "of filling the shoes of the honourable President?" "Physically, sir," I replied, "perhaps not" (Streeter's shoes were notoriously large), "but as the President's umbra or shadow the feat presents no difficulty." "Considering your diminutive stature," persisted the inquirer after truth, "ought you not more properly to be called the President's umbrella?"

The last memory is slighter still. I was walking in the meadows on a sunny summer day with an intimate friend: and some distance off there passed hurriedly by under the tall trees the long

ungainly form of Streeter, his gown billowing behind him, a sort of awkward haste contrasting oddly with the quiet peace of everything about him. My friend and I looked at one another smiling slightly: and then fell into one of those silences which sometimes succeed a sudden mutual comprehension. "If a man told me," said my friend suddenly, "that he knew Streeter and disliked him, I should look on him with some suspicion. I should think there was something wrong with him." I agreed then with that judgment. I do so still.

> "*Men willingly change their governments, believing that they are going to improve their condition: in which they are deceived, for experience shows that they are worse off than ever.*"
>
> MACHIAVELLI.

THERE are a surprising number of portraits of him in existence. The most popular in this country is that which Max Nordau drew of the philosopher Nietzsche—"You seem to see a madman, with flashing eyes and grinding teeth": and it is really Signor Mussolini's own fault that this unflattering portrait is so popular. If a man will say in public that he is "dancing on the prostrate corpse of liberty" what can he expect the ordinary pavement artist, who has his sense of humour too, to make of him?

A schoolfellow of Mussolini's gave me a year or two ago a very early portrait of him. "Comedian," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "Pure comedian. Able? Oh, dear, no. Not a shred of ability." This must be a very early portrait: for it bears no real resemblance at all to the man who all through these last troubled years has ruled Italy with such an iron determination. A

French Abbé the other night gave me one much more life-like. "Ability? Why, yes. An extreme ability to make other people believe that he is able." This is very shrewd and contains truth: perhaps half the truth, but unfortunately half the truth about almost all the eminently successful persons that have ever lived. A portrait given me by the late Lord Oxford has always puzzled me. "The gravest danger to Europe since Napoleon," he said, and descanted for ten minutes or so on the peril of the Duce's prancings and caperings to European peace. But are they really so serious? There are at least signs that the heart of Europe is ceasing to palpitate so violently whenever the Duce breathes out his threatenings and slaughters. It has come to be remarked that if he scandalously disregards Polonius's advice to "beware of entrance to a quarrel" he is very careful to secure always the requisite emergency exit. A strain of slyness runs through his boastful truculence: an attribute of greatness or littleness, according to your point of view. His imperialism may be a nuisance: it does not seem clear that in his hands at any rate it is ever likely to be much worse. Doubtless he would not scruple to go to war were there anything to gain by it: but what war could bring to Italy, and incidentally to Mussolini, anything but certain loss and, quite probably,

complete ruin? Signor Mussolini must know this quite as well as another: his swashbuckling serves him very well for certain definite purposes; but war—real war—would break the sword which he waves so gallantly: and that cannot be his desire. He will only fight if he is forced to do so: but he will continue to thrust out his chest indefinitely. It will be his customary attitude: for certain perfectly definite reasons.

These, I think, are explained, or can be deduced by the intelligent, from a portrait which he recently painted of himself. "I do *l'escrime*," he told the reporter, "I box. I *nage*. I conduct the auto." A stout fellow, you see; a man's man. There is much more in this picture than meets the eye. The main mystery of Fascism is the source of its strength—its spiritual roots, so to speak. For it must have roots, or it would not have changed Italy as it has done. And no impartial observer can deny, whatever he may think of Fascism, that the spirit of Mussolini's Italy is wholly different from the spirit of Giolitti's Italy. You may say that the new spirit is an evil spirit or an unlicensed spirit: it is undeniably a different spirit and in its way a potent one. Its source is not Fascist theory. German philosophers have sought to analyse and dissect Fascist theory. I have myself studied a little the pamphlets and speeches in which it is,

presumably officially, expounded. And no man who is not determined for some reason to believe the contrary can seriously doubt after such an examination that Fascist theory is just nonsense. Hobbes, in his extreme dotage, or Machiavelli when his reason was tottering, might have said the sort of thing contained in these pamphlets, though they would have said it better. But a reasonably well-informed schoolboy could expose the crude fallacies of which they are compact. Fascist theory is simply a theory manufactured after the event to explain a movement of which, whatever was the origin, it certainly was not. Men frequently give, consciously or unconsciously, the wrong reasons for their actions and they sometimes give silly reasons for them. But a passionate and largely unlettered people does not rush into a revolution under the spur of enthusiasm for a theory which looks, when stated, like nothing so much as a spider's web drawn by a mad child, so complicated it is and at the same time so divorced from the plainest facts.

The spiritual force of Fascism must therefore be drawn from some other source: and the main source is, I suspect, revealed in this portrait of himself by the Duce. Italian youth after the war was smarting sullenly under the contempt in which it secretly felt itself to be held by foreigners —and especially by the French, who, from Mar-

shal Foch downwards, were by no means guarded in their expressions after Caporetto. The taunt that they were physical weaklings and degenerates ate into Italian youth's soul: and the Duce used and aroused the slumbering passion. Probably he shared it himself. In any case he showed the way to a retort not entirely ignoble. Let them follow their Duce: let them do *l'escrime* and box and *nage* and conduct the auto: and then the world would see what terrible fellows the youth of Italy really were.

It is from this root that the worst evils of Fascist rule also spring. The Italian exiles should in their own interests withdraw from circulation one portrait of Mussolini which has been widely published—that which represents him as Mephistopheles in person. It is unconvincing in itself: and it does their cause no good. For no man is much the worse—in England at any rate—for being described as the Devil. The really damaging portrait of the Duce is not that which represents him as Mephistopheles, but that which recalls rather strongly the features of the late Mr. William Sikes. It is damaging because it is true: and because this portrait really has considerable significance for us. It is not our affair how Italy is governed by Italians—and the Fascists are after all Italians, though they need not make such a noise about it. But one side

of the Fascist government is not government at all, but mere ruffianism. The murder of Matteoti, the sacking of the *Corriere* offices, the castor oil and the beatings and the cowardly insults to its prisoners—these are the things that have made the Duce and his Government stink in the nostrils of most Englishmen without any regard to party. There is no doubt that he is himself largely responsible for them.

The only excuse—it cannot be called a defence—is that in this respect also he is what Emerson would have called a "representative man." There are—or there were till recently—two Italians in London: the one a tall, melancholy man: the other short, round and cheerful. They are not unlike the famous executioners of Louis XI., immortalised in Scott's "Quentin Durward." The tall man is an anti-Fascist: the little man is a Fascist and mocks ceaselessly at his companion. "He is an anti-Fascist," he cries laughing. "It is because of his brother. Ho, ho, it is because of his brother. They invite him to dinner. They invite him to dinner. They say, 'We are sorry, but you have written against the Government. Now we must punish you.' And they hit him with sticks. They hit him on the head till he bleed. And that is why he is an anti-Fascist. It is because of his brother, ho, ho, ho!" and tears of merriment flow down

the little man's cheeks. And the other does not make the obvious retort and hit him on the head: he only listens glumly, his melancholy a shade deeper.

They say nations have the Governments which they deserve. Poor Italy in that case must have done something worse than anybody could possibly have imagined.

# MR. LEON M. LION

> "*We are to consider, too, that a great player does what few are capable to do: he is a great artist.*"
>
> BOSWELL.

WHEN he was sixteen (if I remember rightly) he ran away to join a company of strolling players and met the lineal descendant of Mr. Vincent Crummles. Even to-day life in a struggling theatrical company on tour in the provinces is not all that the fancy of a stage-struck boy paints it: and thirty years ago it must have been something which it requires a very lively and well-practised fancy to paint at all. The humour of Mr. Crummles is much more easily perceived by an observer seated in comfortable circumstances at some considerable distance from him than by his unfortunate employees, who are the victims of his failings and his failures, including in the last resort, as in this case, a trick of suddenly vanishing all together, leaving the wretched company penniless to shift for itself as best it could. Yet Lion's Mr. Crummles was true to type; the humour was there too, if it was rather a bitter sweeting to the rest. It came out unexpectedly, for instance, at

Bacup, where a play was being performed in which Mr. Crummles, as the heavy father, was required to sit down in his chair, with Lion, his son, at his feet, make a long confession, and duly die. Mr. Crummles sat down all right: but being extremely intoxicated, he promptly went to sleep without making any confession beyond a few inarticulate grunts and sighs. A comedian in the company, seeing from the wings what had happened, rose to the occasion. He rushed on, a book of words in his hand. "Ah, my poor old friend! He is dead. But had he lived, he would have said . . ." and he began to read the confession. Bacup, however, was not to be so fobbed off: and amid shouts and jeers and missiles from the angry gods the curtain came hastily down.

It is rather wonderful that the delicate, sensitive boy should have stood the rough life so successfully and emerged from it in the end with so little real hurt to body or spirit. But if he was delicate, he was wiry too: and behind the fastidiousness there was a singularly steady pertinacity and a kind of toughness. In the anxieties, and even in the very squalor, of the life there was generally a touch of humorous adventure. Returning late to a room procured with extreme difficulty in a little Irish town, overcrowded as a result of some fair, he found a

man asleep in his bed. "Mrs. O'Reilly, Mrs. O'Reilly," he cried, rushing down to the kitchen where the old lady was still merrymaking with her gossips, "there's a man in my bed." "Sure, and don't I know it?" retorted the lady. "And don't I know who he is? Isn't he a nice man? Isn't he a nice clean horse dealer from Cork?"

These days were over when I first met Lion. He was back again in London, not much richer either in money or repute: but with unquenched spirit and hope still burning as brightly as ever. It was the time when Giant Paradox still held the world tight in his grip: when the "Dolly Dialogues" were the gospel of every bright young man, and Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler was writing "Isabel Carnaby" and other novels in which people talk in the elaborate epigrammatic fashion that seems now so queer and stilted and unreal: when to the smart undergraduate it seemed amusing to address an unoffending stranger with some such remark as that recorded by the author of "Margaret at Oxford"—"I should like to be naked and keep a cat." The almost ingenuous honesty which is the foundation of his character saved Lion from the worst features of the phase. The effect upon him of the prevailing temper—a sort of shallow superficial intellectualism—was to send him worshipping with quite unaffected adoration first at one shrine

and then at another. His " Lo, here is God, or there is God " (though, like most of the younger intellectuals of the time, he was a pugnacious and rather strident agnostic) sounded in all companies where his eager vivid personality flashed. Nothing, not even indigestion and generally poor health, could really damp these enthusiasms. Point out to him in the midst of some new confession that he had found salvation in quite another quarter but a short while before, and he would be momentarily abashed. But he was up again directly, arguing as eagerly as ever: hot upon some fresh scent.

At this time he was a real Socialist, a burning sense of the wrongs of the under-dog adding a certain truculence to his theoretical convictions: and the revolt of the Bohemian against the contumely of the respectable perhaps a little more. His housekeeping at Bushey was ostentatiously, defiantly, Bohemian; and it is typical of his generosity that, poor as he must have been in those days, it was the constant refuge, especially of a Sunday afternoon, of a stream of literary and artistic Bohemians, actors, novelists and painters. Yet even then a hard spirit of practical commonsense, which played a great part in his ultimate success, rose up from time to time and fought with his rather *farouche* idealism. The little boys would steal his apples. His stern Socialism

forbade him to ask for the police protection of private rights which, on his theory, he ought not to have acquired. Yet his soul yearned wistfully for his lost apples. In the end idealism won for that time: but only, so to speak, by a short head.

Success came to him very late: so late indeed that, even his friends and admirers began to doubt a little whether the light that seemed to burn so brightly were not a will o' the wisp, and what we took for gold a glittering alloy. But the stuff was genuine enough. The "Chinese Puzzle" made his name with a wide public: his own fine acting made the "Chinese Puzzle." As an actor his range is necessarily restricted by certain natural handicaps: his small stature, his voice, which all his arts and crafts (and they are many) can never really disguise, and the very marked character of his own individuality which shines through any impersonation, making it slightly grotesque where the two personalities will not blend. But within his range he is excellent. He was excellent as the old Chinaman in this play: and his excellence in "Number 17" is attested by the simple fact that without him this farce is scarcely worth seeing at all. It was only his amazingly humorous rendering of the abjectly terrified mariner which made "Number 17" the popular favourite it has proved.

But easily his masterpiece was his original impersonation of the hero in Galsworthy's "Justice." Nowadays he is not so good: he is older, and can no longer be made by any art to appear so completely the forlorn, lost, boyish figure. But in the old days this was a wonderful piece of work. He looked so perfectly the character: and his rendering stopped with so complete an artistry at just the right point, arousing sympathy to the very utmost by its sheer poignant realism, and just not crossing the faint line where the squalor of the picture would have been merely painful and disgusting. No one has ever done this part so well. It is doubtful whether it could be done better.

A certain casualness has marked his success as a producer. He has had many failures, and I doubt if his standard of judgment, whether as applied to the supposed taste of the public, or to the intrinsic worth of the plays themselves, has ever been really reliable. Now he will tell you bluntly that he has no standard: that he produces simply what pleases him, for no defined reason: and that his successes have all been pure accidents. "Number 17," for instance, was produced in a fit of pique, because he heard that another producer was about to exercise the option which he had neglected. "The Fanatics," another little gold mine, was brought out, with

no suspicion of its destined success, from friendship to the author, Mr. Miles Malleson. The Galsworthy cycle may not have been very profitable: but it proved far from the desperate adventure which it was thought to be when projected and adopted by Lion purely on the strength of his literary convictions. It is these convictions, and the courage which he has shown in maintaining them, which have made his triumph as a producer a really important event for the English stage in years when hardly any producers have the courage to challenge deliberately rather low popular tastes, and very few have any convictions to make the risk worth while. If he has bowed occasionally in the temple of Rimmon, it is a very stern critic that will blame him for it: for most of his rivals do nothing else.

The real wonder is that so much has survived the long stern ordeal and lives on into these days of his prosperity. Some things no doubt are gone. The red-hot Socialism has vanished in a mild cynicism. The spasms of asceticism have given place to a gentle epicureanism. But the old generosity is there still, shown in countless unrecorded acts of kindness to the unfortunate and those who have no helper: the old enthusiasm for the things that seem to him to be excellent: the old courage which faces with a kind of reckless vivacity the great adventure of living. Yes, the

old fires burn still: if not perhaps quite so brightly, yet much more steadily: and only those who know him well can realise how good and comfortable a thing it is to warm your hands at them in a cold world.

# SIR WILLIAM JOYNSON HICKS

*"I beg your pardon, sir. But are you a person of some importance?"*

THEODORE HOOK.

THE rise of Mr. Baldwin is commonly regarded as one of the surprises of modern British politics: but the rise of Sir William Joynson Hicks is really far more surprising. Mr. Bonar Law was not intellectually a giant, and the fact drew from the late Lord Oxford one of the few really savage epigrams with which he is credited. But Mr. Bonar Law was at least intelligent. While Mr. Joseph Chamberlain in his decline was wallowing through a series of speeches which made a bad case seem absolutely absurd, Mr. Bonar Law made a succession of orations which are at least a clear, precise and intelligible statement of the real case for Protection. Mr. Bonar Law knew about Protection. It is not at all clear at present that Sir William Joynson Hicks really knows about anything. And yet he is one of the most powerful men in the country.

The climax of his fame was reached with the

two speeches on the Prayer Book. If he foresaw the immense popularity which these two speeches would win him, his intervention was extremely acute: but it is charitable, and indeed reasonable, to suppose that he was merely saying in these speeches what he thought or at least what he felt. The thing is done in politics sometimes. So regarded, they are a very interesting illustration both of his method and of his mind. The basis of his attack upon the new Prayer Book was the Englishman's right to hear the same service in every parish church. If the Englishman ever possessed such a right, he has certainly long ago lost it: if he visits to-day twelve parish churches, he will be very lucky if he hears anything that can fairly be called the same service said or sung in more than three: any serious attempt to impose the desired uniformity would certainly result in the complete and immediate disruption of the English Church as we know it: and so far as the rejected Prayer Book touched this matter at all it would have led to a slightly greater rather than a less degree of community of worship. Muddle-headedness could hardly go further. But the passion for uniformity which inspired Sir William's eloquence is interesting in itself. With most men tidiness is a minor habit: with him it is a major virtue. He has a mind which is a cross between that of an extremely

conscientious policeman and that of an extremely prim old maid. He loves order for its own sake.

This came out strongly in his famous Arcos raid. The Home Secretary learnt with indignation that the Russians did not pay complete respect to the English police code. They never have done: they are not an orderly race. A very little acquaintance with the facts must have convinced him that he could not really compel them to regard the police code, that their intrigues were in effect wholly negligible, and that the only result of Government intervention would be a certain amount of loss to British trade at a time when it could very ill afford to lose any market whatever. Yet he persisted and carried his will in the Cabinet in his pugnacious pertinacious manner: like a man who, exasperated by the presence of moles beneath his tennis lawn, digs all up, fails to catch the mole, and spoils his lawn in the attempt.

His great good fortune—or Mr. Baldwin's insight—made him Home Secretary. It is the one office in which mediocrity can not only succeed, but shine. The two or three admittedly successful Home Secretaries have been rather dull, stupid men. The two or three disastrous failures—with one exception—have been rather clever able men. Sir William Joynson Hicks has been an admirable Home Secretary. Whenever he has touched a large issue—like the

Savidge case—he has come to grief. The Parliamentary handling of the Savidge case was bad. But in the detail of administration he has been surprisingly good. It is doubtful whether the routine work of the department was ever better done. For he has not only industry, method and a positive lust for tidiness, he has the bluff sense of justice of the average middle class Englishman. A friend of mine of no great means—let us say Lazarus—was pursued at law by an adversary who was a very rich man—let us say Dives. Dives had no case: he trusted in his riches that they should deliver him. When the case had gone on three days Lazarus, who saw the costs mounting up and could not sleep, came to Sir William Joynson Hicks, his solicitor, and said "I cannot stand it. I shall be ruined. Settle." "Nonsense," said Jix, "these rich men should be taught a lesson. It is mere blackmail. Stand to your guns, I will stand by you." And Jix did, and Jix won.

That is Jix at his best. British respectability is sometimes ridiculous and sometimes, when it is very smug, rather odious: but it has the virtues of its qualities. I do not think Sir William would recognise Justice if she appeared to him in the form of a tattered beggar woman selling matches in the street: but he would recognise her, quite simply and honestly, in the person of an energetic

Church worker who respected the conventions. That is to him the figure of Justice: and scores of thousands of his fellow countrymen are of the same opinion.

The secret of Jix's power is that he is the epitome of a large and very powerful class—of its prejudices and limitations as well as of its sterling virtues. How far this wind will carry his queer little barque remains to be seen: quite possibly very far: even to the limit which his perky ambition is reputed to entertain. It is quite possible that when King Baldwin dies the great middle class of this country may be persuaded to cry " long live King Jix." And if we must have a Tory Prime Minister, we might have a worse. He will be well enough in quiet times. Only if the storm winds begin to blow the thought of such a succession must occasion a slight shudder to the reflective. He is so fussy and meddlesome —in his little way, so brave and so honest—that he will probably refuse to delegate his powers to the possibly capable subordinate whom a merciful Providence may provide. Certainly if I am in the ship when the storm arises with this pilot at the helm I shall repeat with quite unusual fervour the prayer appointed by my Church to be said for those in peril on the sea.

# MR. J. H. THOMAS

> *"If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing: I am a man as other men are"—and there let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug, the joiner.*
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

THE chairman arose. "Our guest," he said "is a member of the Labour Government. We, of course, have nothing to do with the Labour Government. I personally have no sympathy with the Labour Government. . . ." The diners, for the most part well-fed Tory city merchants, laughed and shuffled with their feet, and murmured, embarrassed and angry, as decent Englishmen of every class are apt to be, in the presence of a social ineptitude. Only Mr. Thomas sat beaming broadly, wagging his head after his manner.

At last the chairman sat down. Mr. Thomas arose. "The honourable chairman" he said "has told you that he has no sympathy with the Labour Government. Of course he has not. How could he have? You have only to look at the honourable chairman to see that he could not possibly have any sympathy with the Labour Government. . . ." And amid the laughter and

cheers of his political opponents, Mr. Thomas's beaming smile grew broader and broader.

It is an example, simple enough but sufficient, of Mr. Thomas's extraordinarily pliant mind. Almost alone among the Labour leaders he can bend gracefully. The noble mind of Mr. Philip Snowden cannot bend at all: it is almost its only defect. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's can bend: but with such shriekings and writhings and hysterical contortions that the astonished observer recoils amazed and the concession loses all its grace and most of its effect. Mr. Cook does not so much bend as turn a series of somersaults, standing on his head, so to speak, continually; if indeed Mr. Cook can be said in the intellectual sense to have a head to stand upon. Only Mr. Thomas possesses in the highest degree the statesman's gift of yielding gracefully: so gracefully that he often secures all that he really wants, and sometimes a little more, even in seeming to surrender it. In the art of negotiation no Labour leader of our day is in the same street with him. His railwaymen know this well: as indeed they have cause to do. No advocate has pleaded more brilliantly for his clients than Mr. Thomas has for his union: the results speak for themselves.

Mr. Snowden is a principle, Mr. MacDonald is an attitude, and Mr. Henderson is an institu-

tion: but Mr. Thomas is a man. He seems on meeting him even a "very fearful man" like Hurry Chunder Mookerjee. I met him, I remember, on the eve of the Great Strike: so full of alarms and excursions that even in the grim circumstances it was a little difficult not to smile at him. I think he really is a very nervous, highly strung personage: and yet he must be of a most high courage and resolution at need. Few men have had more vindictive or more unscrupulous enemies. Continually they have lain in wait for him, seeking to entrap him: and always at the appointed time Mr. Thomas has arisen and smitten them from Dan to Beersheba, glorying. He is very vain: but his vanity is not the intolerable self-righteousness which makes Mr. MacDonald so insufferable in his worse moods: nor even the solemn vanity which seems to have wrecked the career, that looked at one time so brilliant in promise, of Mr. Frank Hodges. It is simply an exuberant self-appreciation, a rather schoolboy boastfulness: he delights in life and in his own achievement in it with the sort of luscious satisfaction of a small child devouring a particularly excellent jam tart. If Mr. Thomas had had no quality but this joyous zest in life and in himself, he would have been merely an amusing buffoon, like Mr. Jack Jones. Having so much else, the braggart boasting in which he sometimes

indulges is still not offensive: it even adds a kind of gusto to the strange dish which we know as Mr. Thomas. Like so much else about him it is so very human.

His grotesque trappings are a little puzzling, especially his permanent quarrel with the eighth letter of the English alphabet. It can hardly be that so clever a man, a natural orator of the first rank, could not learn a simple lesson that the dullest of trade union secretaries teaches himself without particular difficulty. One suspects that Mr. Thomas thinks his aitchlessness an asset: and if he does, it probably is, for he knows his own world admirably. Yet he is said to be a little touchy on the point: and to deny with some indignation that he spoke in the Commons of an *ad hoc* inquiry as a "haddock" inquiry. Perhaps the tiny hurdle did really present a difficulty to the clever man. I have known a well read able man who was quite unable to teach himself to spell even tolerably. In some very rare cases, this may be true also of pronunciation. It would be like Mr. Thomas nimbly to turn a natural difficulty into an artificial advantage. One of the fascinating things about him is that it is so hard to say where his real simplicity ends and his undoubted cunning begins: or indeed sometimes which is which.

His place in the Labour world, great as it

inevitably is, does not seem to the outsider quite comparable with his abilities or his achievements. Yet it is doubtful whether it will become much greater and probably Mr. Thomas is content enough with it. He is as cautions as he is at need bold. Probably the Left would not tolerate as a leader the man whose subtle policy destroyed one great labour combination and nearly prevented the Strike. Mr. Thomas is a realist and an opportunist: you cannot even conceive him going to the stake for any principle whatever: he would sell the dictatorship of the proletariat unwinkingly—or rather with a most ostentatious wink—in return for a shilling a week on wages and substantial improvements in hours and conditions. The temper is defensible: but it is not surprising that to the honest fanatic of the Left it seems mere black treachery and apostasy. Moscow's thunderings against the supposed treachery of British Labour leaders to sound proletarian theory are for the most part empty nonsense. They have more substance where Mr. Thomas is concerned. And yet what an immense change might have been wrought in the nightmare which has brooded over Russia these last years had there been in that unhappy country one man with the courage, the humour, the commonsense, the real ability and the tremendous popular appeal of Mr. J. H. Thomas.

*" Do you bite your thumb at us ? "*
*" No, sir, not at you, sir. But I do bite my thumb."*

SHAKESPEARE.

LEST it be thought discourteous to a lady whom in many respects I admire, let me explain that my quotation is founded on fact. I had fallen into the hands of a very grievous bore and suddenly I espied Lady Astor near us, listening intently. Scenting deliverance, I took a step towards her. She did not in fact, bite her thumb: but to show me that she saw my design, and that the net was spread in vain in the sight of the bird, she had recourse to a homely gesture familiar to medical practice and approved by rude little boys: she put out her tongue: having done which, she whisked briskly round and was gone.

Some grave people are offended by Lady Astor's *gaminerie*. I confess I find it extremely entertaining: behind the horseplay there is generally humour and sometimes wit: and in this dull featureless age we must not surely be too nice in criticising the methods by which real character expresses itself. There is a certain

satisfaction in the picture of Lady Astor talking to Colonel House, gravest and most formal of little men. "Come to my house to-morrow evening, Colonel House? Best nigger minstrels in London. Promise? Honest Indian?"

There was an old gentleman in Oxford who used to begin his series of lectures with the words "David Ricardo, the only British economist of any note, was a Dutch Jew born in London in the year 1772." Lady Astor, the first woman member of the British Parliament, is an American born in Virginia: and if "representative" means "typical" it would be hard to find any woman more entirely unlike the average English woman. Her first appearance in Parliament was heralded by an idiot clamour of doubts and difficulties and sniggers and sneers. Would she wear a hat? Would she borrow her neighbour's top hat in order to address the Speaker "seated and with her hat on?" All sorts of silly little difficulties were suggested by persons who wished to persuade themselves that it is impossible for women to take part with dignity in male assemblies. Mr. Speaker probably never gave himself a moment's thought about all this nonsense. If he could have exchanged the handful of Labour members who were at that time trying to turn Parliament into a bear garden for a whole regiment of decently conducted women, he would

probably have held that Mr. Baldwin's prayer for "peace in our time" had been miraculously granted.

Her early appearances were in fact very successful. She is a fair speaker (though not as good as some of the later women members, Miss Bondfield and the Duchess of Atholl and Lady Iveagh). She has humour and any amount of courage and vivacity: and she was just sufficiently overawed by her singular position to be reasonably restrained. Still, it was an uncomfortable position: and the enthusiasm with which she welcomed the arrival at Westminster of Mrs. Wintringham was certainly not feigned. The two were a comic contrast. Lady Astor tends to the flamboyant, Mrs. Wintringham to the stolid. Lady Astor's trim, slight figure is almost boyish: Mrs. Wintringham is the British matron personified. Lady Astor's earnestness runs to fanaticism and vents itself as often as not in invective: Mrs. Wintringham shows hers in the placid exposition of the facts and figures which her steady industry collects. It says much for both women, but especially for Lady Astor, that their relations were so cordial. Indeed in the work of the pioneer woman member—to prepare, that is, the way for others—Lady Astor has always shown an impulsive zeal and generosity which is very attractive.

It was the more noticeable at the time because, for Lady Astor herself, a period of what Mr. Boffin would have called " declining and falling " was setting in. The House was beginning to tire of her. Her vivacities, which had seemed amusing—" Pick it up for me, Bob " to Lord Robert Cecil when she dropped her notes—came now to look like mere impertinences. Her shrill squabbles with the Labour members, in which her courage was at first remarked and admired, seemed now merely shrill and not particularly courageous. Members grumbled privately that if Labour was rude and boorish, the characteristic notes of its critic were hardly courtliness and dignity. She was held, moreover —very unfairly, I think—to be trading on her sex. What was happening is a recurring incident in the relation of the sexes. Man is continually encouraging woman to take liberties, and then turning round and condemning her austerely for taking the liberties which he himself encouraged her to take. The scene must have been enacted in the Garden of Eden with the serpent as an interested and amused spectator. It must be admitted that Lady Astor herself had contributed to the rather rapid decline of her influence and popularity. After you have made your bow to the Speaker, and your judiciously deferential maiden speech, there is in the House of Commons

a door marked "Be Bold": there are even two or three: but the adventurer arrives more speedily here than in most places at the door inscribed "Be not too bold": and if he is wise, he takes the injunction to heart. But Lady Astor, in the popular phrase, "was not having any." She rushed in her rather headlong way through door after door: and she began to find herself as a result of this process out in the cold.

From this exposed and uncomfortable position, Andromeda was rescued by an involuntary and very extraordinary deliverer. An unwilling Perseus appeared, effectively disguised as the financier Bottomley. Lady Astor had "butted in" on a divorce law reform debate, opposing the further extension of divorce facilities. She had herself divorced her first husband, though few people knew it. The fact was not in itself important. A woman, whether she has or has not divorced her husband, has a perfect right in a free country to hold any opinion she likes on divorce. The unfortunate incident in Lady Astor's life reflects not the slightest shadow upon her honour, and no one who knows the facts can pretend for a moment that it does. But the fact that she had herself profited by the divorce law ought not to have been suppressed: one can understand the delicacy which alone led her to suppress it: but it would have been wiser, if she

so felt, not to have intervened at all. Bottomley's nose for scandal detected the possibilities of the situation: and he attacked Lady Astor in his paper. There was a case which good manners and good taste could perhaps have made without offence. The man who expected these from Mr. Bottomley was an optimist indeed. But the House was incensed at the mere fact of the attack, which it thought (quite properly) should have been made within its walls, not without. And while it did not at this time much love Lady Astor, it fairly loathed the financier. It had always resented his presence: it had tried unsuccessfully to boycott him: it had submitted only coldly and sullenly to the spell of his great ability and brazen effrontery: and now it saw its chance. It gave Lady Astor when she made her explanation a warm welcome: and it gave Mr. Bottomley, when he tried to explain, a warmer welcome still: but in a different sense.

Her position is now assured, and, unless the rather squalid intrigues of "the trade" succeed in unseating her, is likely to remain so. Why she calls herself a Conservative I have never been quite able to understand; except that she likes Mr. Baldwin's face and does not like the faces of some of the Labour members—sound woman's reasons both, no doubt. I should question her zeal for Protection; and on almost all the issues

in which she is so passionately interested, she is at odds with her party. She has done much good work—for the woman's movement in all its branches in particular. She has been extraordinarily valuable as a sort of unofficial envoy in regard to American relations: and despite her occasional impetuosities she has shown herself a much more interesting and active Parliamentarian than the general ruck of male members. The Mother of Parliaments has sound reason to be proud of her first daughter. Her failings are of the kind which seem much more serious at the time than they do in perspective: and her sterling qualities are likely on a long view to be more, rather than less, conspicuous. When persons in a sense far more important have vanished, I fancy the trim, alert, rather quaint little figure will still be visible, still gallantly waving on the far horizon the flag for which she has fought so vigorously and with so undaunted a courage.

# SIR JOHN SIMON

*" Rather a tough customer in argeyment, Joe, if any one was to try and tackle him."*

DICKENS.

TWO men were pointed out to me when I was at Oxford by one now high in the educational world as not only the ablest men of their year, but the ablest men that had in his time been at Oxford at all. Of one of them, with all his splendid talents, almost nothing has since been heard. The other was Sir John Simon. He was at that time a great light in the Union, celebrated for the rather cynical wit of his speeches. One of his jests, " The tradesmen of Oxford, to whom the University in general and the undergraduates in particular, owe so much " has remained in my memory ever since.

It was always rather a frosty wit. His enemies would say that the frost had hardened as he grew older. And it may be true that his cool cautious temper has withheld him from a certain kind of greatness. But it has also been an immense strength to him and part at least of the secret of his long extraordinarily successful career. One

of his earlier successes was due almost entirely to it. It was a very different man, Mr. Comyns Carr, who finally destroyed Bottomley. But it was Sir John Simon who struck the first blow: a shrewd one, which properly followed up should have been the last. No one who was in court at the time is likely to forget the scene. Bottomley had won an earlier case by the time-honoured method of provoking the opposing counsel: counsel lost his temper and his case. Mr. Bottomley tried the same tactics again. "You and I, as men of the world, Mr. Simon . . . " he said confidentially, embracing him, so to speak, publicly. A slight shudder ran through the tall, aristocratic-looking figure: there was just an additional touch of acid in the cold voice as it replied. But Mr. Bottomley might as well have tried to make an iceberg lose its temper. His tactics failed ignominiously and ludicrously against the suave self-command on which the furious waves of Indian Nationalism are now dashing equally in vain.

There have been three important turning points in Sir John Simon's career. The first was when the war broke out. The Cabinet, as is now well known, was divided. Originally there was a majority in it for peace and neutrality. The battle was decided when Mr. Lloyd George changed sides; it was over when Simon followed

him. The late Lord Morley spoke always with great bitterness of Simon's conduct on this occasion. But Lord Morley's statement of his case in recently published documents is not impressive. The second was in the very middle of the war. The public temper at the time was rather despondent: the campaign seemed to be going ill: scandals were coming out about the management of the camps at home and about recruiting methods: confidence in the Government's capacity was not high. For one moment it looked as though Simon might emerge as the leader of a definite peace party, and if he had, a not inconsiderable body of opinion would at that time have gathered to him. But his cool temper reasserted itself. He looked at the fence and went away. He was undoubtedly wise, in view of after events. The despondent mood was merely a momentary phase, a cloud which passed almost as quickly as it came. As it was, the incident did him harm: it might have ruined a lesser man. But it could not permanently hurt a man so pre-eminently first as he already was at the Bar: and with so great a power of cool waiting. He rose again slowly from his temporary eclipse: and then the General Strike set him upon a pinnacle. His speeches after the General Strike made him the darling of the middle classes, a little hot and flushed with their victory. They

struck Labour dumb with impotent rage: and they annoyed and irritated the Radical Left. No one could deny the truth of his conclusions, presented and drawn with all his customary mastery of logical statement. The General Strike was in cold fact an attempted revolution: a deliberate resort, that is to say, to a form of agitation not known to, and not consistent with, the constitution. It was still permissible to point out that certainly 90 per cent. of the people concerned had no revolutionary intentions whatever: and to doubt whether, that being so, the logical consequences would in reality have followed in a country which like ours temperamentally holds logic in contempt and dislike, and is continually, as its history shows, trying, and not always unsuccessfully, to evade the logical consequences of its own acts and theories.

It is a little surprising that Labour was not more lastingly incensed against Simon as a result of this display of the lawyer's conscience in action. He is a rather odd representative of an industrial constituency like Spen Valley. But it is a popular error that the crowd likes always to be fawned upon and flattered. Crowds are at heart cowardly and are apt to respect the man who bullies them. They are awed by and pleased with a speaker who has the air of a great man. And Sir John Simon has more the air of a great man than any other

English public man of the day. It is a perfectly natural air. It is not exaggerated to the point of positive deformity as it was with the late Lord Curzon: nor self-conscious and theatrical as it is with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. It is just his own air, never varying. In all circumstances he would bear himself with a cool dignity. Also he is an admirable speaker. He has suffered more than most people from the death of reporting. In the old days his speeches would have occupied columns in the newspapers and the report of them flown through the lips of men. At his best he is equally good in Parliament and on the platform. His speeches on the cruiser question were models of Parliamentary oratory: except that they were each a few minutes too long, there was hardly any formal criticism of them possible. Yet very little attention was paid to them. Similarly some of his platform speeches are quite first-class. The impression they make on his audiences is undoubted: and perhaps it is spread in a vague way by their reports of the prophet whom they went out for to hear and found impressive even beyond their expectation. His renown stands in fact from whatever cause higher than the newspaper snippets about him would lead you to believe. Doubtless, to look like a great man and talk like a great man and be considered by a substantial body of your countrymen

as possessing some at least of the essential attributes of greatness does not in itself justify a man's claim to the title. But it is a step towards it: in a democracy, and with favourable fortune, it may be a long step.

> "*Therefore, if a man can play the true logician, to have as well judgment as invention, he may do great matters, especially if the times be fit.*"
>
> BACON.

I THINK if I were asked to choose the two men most unlike each other in all England I should select Mr. J. M. Keynes and Mr. George Lansbury. "Doctrinaire Socialism," says Mr. Keynes in one of his later books, "is little better than a dusty survival of a plan to meet problems of fifty years ago based on a misunderstanding of what some one said a hundred years ago."

It would be interesting to see what would happen if somebody could be induced to say or sing that sentence one pleasant Sunday afternoon in some place where Socialists were gathered together. It would be like an icy wind suddenly penetrating into the warm, heavy atmosphere of the assembly. And yet, how good it would be for them! For some day these people will have to leave warming their hands at the fire of their own sensibilities and come out into the cold: and it will be very cold. They will have somehow to convince themselves of the stark fact that of all

nations in the world—the Chinese possibly excepted—the English are the most incorrigibly individualist. There stands before me as I write the figure of an angry little lady, a trade union secretary's letter brandished indignantly in her hand. "He signs himself 'Yours fraternally,'" she exclaims with flashing eyes, "and then he asks me for two guineas. I am not his sister. I have nothing whatever to do with him. I am a graduate of Aberdeen University. I will not pay him a penny."

To look at Keynes, you would say (if you looked carelessly) a rather ordinary type of youngish don; with his tall, heavily stooping figure, his pale face and his black hair growing now thin on the top. His listening courteous attitude, as though he were speaking very urbanely and almost deferentially, seems to confirm the impression. But if you attend to what he is saying you will find that it is never deferential and by no means always urbane. The magnificent eyes, moreover, contradict the notion that here is only a mere studious bookman: and a certain alert birdlike quickness in the movements of his head. It is as though, like a bird, he were warily watching everything and suffering nothing to escape him: and indeed little does. It is this keen sensibility which is, I fancy, the real bond between him and Mr. Lloyd George.

It is generally held that "The Economic Consequence of the Peace"—the book which brought Mr. Keynes first to the notice of the great public—was a furious onslaught upon Mr. Lloyd George. So it was: but Mr. Keynes followed Isaac Walton's advice: he handled his frog "as though he loved him": and it is not really Mr. Lloyd George who comes worst out of the ordeal in the end.

"To see the British Prime Minister watching the company with six or seven senses not available to ordinary men, judging character, motives and subconscious impulse, perceiving what each man was thinking and even what each man was going to say next, was to realise that the poor President was playing blind man's buff in that party."

It is worth while having a good many tart things said about one in order to secure such a testimonial to ability as is here paid to "the British Prime Minister." But who would be "the poor President"?

Undoubtedly Mr. Keynes and Mr. Lloyd George appreciate each other's marvellous quick-wittedness. Yet the two kinds of alertness are really different. Mr. Lloyd George's is an emotional vivacity, almost a physical thing: Mr. Keynes' is pure intellectual curiosity, much colder and in the result much more daring and irre-

sponsible. For however much he may despise a convention in his heart, Mr. Lloyd George will not defy and outrage it if he thinks he is going to lose anything by the process. But Mr. Keynes will, just to see what will happen. "There is no such word in the English language," cried Sir Herbert Samuel to him despairingly once, when Keynes wished to employ a certain slang word in a grave semi-official document. "But I wish to extend the English language," retorted Keynes coolly. It was this audacity, springing really from his dilettantéism, which probably led him to pursue with such steady tenacity his curious adventure in Lancashire. To any one who knew the conditions Mr. Keynes' attempt to get the cotton employers to combine seemed on the face of it impossible: that was no doubt its immense attraction for him. And the wonder is not that a measure of success seems to be attending it, but that he should ever have been permitted to prosecute this adventure at all. That he was so permitted is no doubt a proof of the desperate condition of the cotton industry, the last industry in the world, one would have said off-hand, to permit any stranger, let alone a University professor, to meddle with its affairs: but it is also a final proof of the position which Mr. Keynes has attained.

This position is really the result of the forced

union during the war of Big Business and the Civil Service. Before the war, the Civil Service stood on the whole aloof from industry: partly because Trade was not genteel, and partly because non-interference with industry had become a maxim of government, honoured, if not always observed. Business on the other hand retorted scorn for scorn: and, strong in its conviction of its ability to paddle its own canoe unaided, regarded the bureaucracy as a parasitic and useless growth on the body politic. The war taught the abler civil servant, not perhaps the immense power and ramifications of big business, which to some extent he no doubt knew, but what a tremendous engine his organising ability could weld out of them, given the necessary control: and it taught the abler sort of business man the value of scientific organisation on a scale foreign to his experience. It showed him that rule of thumb methods were not enough and inspired some industrious captains with an almost superstitious reverence for the intelligence which they had previously despised. The result, aided by his mordant pen, has been to make Keynes one of the accepted intellectual leaders of the day: and to exalt the horn of the economist generally. The wheel has come full circle since Carlyle railed against "the dismal science" and Disraeli declared that "nobody was really sorry when a

political economist died." The true faith now is enshrined in a phrase in the Liberal Industrial Report—" A true science, capable, perhaps, of benefiting the human lot as much as all the other sciences put together." And I should be startled to hear that it was Keynes who put in the " perhaps."

# MR. ARTHUR HENDERSON

*"Well said, old mole! Can'st work i' the earth so fast?"*

SHAKESPEARE.

FROM the Gallery of the House of Commons I witnessed a good many years ago a curious and ridiculous scene. Mr. Arthur Balfour had just favoured the House with one of his more brilliant exhibitions of dialectic, beautiful as summer lightning and as harmless. Mr. Arthur Henderson rose to reply. Under some strong delusion, the heavy man attempted to meet his antagonist on his own ground and with his own weapons. It was rather like watching a small and entirely demented elephant endeavouring to emulate the graceful *pas seul* of a *demoiselle* crane. The Government benches, after a short astonished pause, guffawed insolently and frankly; from the silent disconcerted Opposition there proceeded no sound but an occasional dismayed grunt.

That is years ago now. Mr. Henderson has learnt his lesson. He would never become a good debater, so slow are the processes of his

mind. But he is a better set speaker than many people realise; his best speeches are very good, and his worst would seem better with a different delivery. But his slowness is sometimes desolating, and was the root cause of all the trouble in the famous incident in which he became for a moment the central figure in public life. Mr. Henderson, it will be remembered, was charged with having heard and accepted a Cabinet decision on a matter of policy, and with having then gone away and made a public speech in quite a different sense. Upon this conduct the Cabinet sat solemnly in deliberation: with Mr. Henderson "on the mat" outside. The truth I believe was that he sat silent and bemused through a rather noisy Cabinet meeting: not understanding, possibly not really hearing, the conclusion eventually reached: and that he then went away and made up his policy for himself. He was left "on the mat" because he would have made such a noise had he been admitted. For in wrath Mr. Henderson can be very articulate indeed. He quelled a threatened industrial lockout during the war by getting the parties in two separate rooms and passing from one to the other thundering at them.

But his real strength—and he knows it—is in quietness and sitting still. It is as the genius of the machine of Eccleston Square that he has

performed for the Labour Party a service as great and perhaps greater than that rendered to it by any of its leaders. And his self-suppression has had its reward. Listen to any two prominent Labour men talking, and it is odds but their talk will take the form of more or less vitriolic criticism of one or other of their leaders. It is one of the curiosities of present-day politics that while the slightest bickering between Liberal leaders is at once magnified and cried from the house-tops, the far more constant and equally profound differences between Labour leaders are as regularly minimised and concealed. The suggestion that the one are differences in principle and the other mere personal bickerings is simply untrue. The gulf which separates Mr. Thomas from Mr. Kirkwood or Mr. Snowden from Mr. Cook is as broad and deep as any in politics. But Mr. Henderson's name is rarely involved in these domestic controversies. It might be too much to say that he was very popular; but he is certainly not unpopular. Avoiding the limelight, he evades the lightning too.

It is possible that he may yet reap a much greater reward. If fate were to remove Mr. MacDonald from his present eminence, it is more than likely that it would be upon "Uncle Arthur" that his mantle would fall, really in default of a better. Mr. Snowden is too old, Mr.

Thomas too far to the Right and Mr. Wheatley too definitely associated with the Left and too much damaged by his recent libel action. The " intellectuals " are disliked and distrusted by the trade unionist rank and file; and Sir Oswald Mosley's flashy promise has not been realised since his return to the House. He has all the defects of Mr. MacDonald, and hardly any of his solider qualities. But " Uncle Arthur " might make a job of it—in certain conditions, which seem not impossible. It may be, and there is a good deal of evidence for the view, that the long period during which British political life has been extremely rich in real personalities is drawing to an end. We are so used to it that we have come to take it as a matter of course that our politicians even of the third and fourth rank should be men of some character and distinction. It is not a matter of course, as the case of all other countries clearly shows. In none of them has political life drawn to it so large a share of the best talent of the nation ; in none of them has the machine appeared at any rate to play so subordinate a part as here. Possibly the day of the machine is coming ; and if it comes it will drive out of politics all the more vigorous sort of personalities, who will not consent to be merely cranks and levers in any political machine. But such a mechanical age will suit Mr. Henderson very

well; and he may plead that he is only carrying a natural evolution a step further. For a long time now devolution has been an accepted practice of British Prime Ministers. That he did so little himself was one secret of Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman's short but brilliant Prime Ministership: Lord Oxford followed suit and Mr. Baldwin too has left as much as possible to subordinates. Only two recent Prime Ministers have really been Lords High Everything Else: Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and it was the ruin of him: and Mr. Lloyd George, during the War; and the War period was a quite exceptional period from which no rule can be deduced. As the first man in the country, in a decorative and literal sense, Mr. Henderson would be incredible and even a little absurd: but as the engineer of a tolerably efficient machine, he might succeed. He might emerge as the first in a possibly extended line of Robot Prime Ministers.

# MR. A. G. GARDINER

*"With much talk will he try thee: and in a smiling manner will search thee out."*

ECCLESIASTICUS.

I KNEW him first as a voice in the darkness: and for many years as nothing else. In the little tram which was in those days the only way of getting to Hampstead after midnight, he sat with some crony or other, talking incessantly: while the rest of us sat mute in the darkness in the stolid English way, or tried painfully to read by the miserable little lamps that were our only light. Even then, when I did not know his name, the snatches of conversation inevitably overheard seemed to me very interesting: and indeed he is an admirable talker. I have heard his talk denounced as pontifical: and when he is nervous and ill at ease with his company it may be. But no reproach could be more unjust applied to his ordinary conversation with his friends. It is astonishingly frank, free and without reserve: and he has touched life at so many angles and met so many interesting people, and read so widely in the desultory sort of way in which a professional

journalist perforce reads. Above all, he talks of everything from politics to cricket with a boyish Pepys-like gusto and delight: his emotionalism has an electric quality and affects all who are in even temporary contact with it.

It was this emotionalism which made his invective the formidable instrument it was. His first attack on Lord Northcliffe in July, 1908, startled Fleet Street and astonished that potentate on his throne. Even now I believe aspiring young journalists turn up this philippic shyly and study it wistfully: a dangerous thing to do, for excellent as it is in its kind it is a bad model. The first attack on Lloyd George (in 1915) was more remarkable in its effect still: it came near to destroying the new Government at a blow. And yet it failed: and its failure is really the proof of the futility of this sort of warfare. If the statesman stand his ground, the journalist can rarely do him much real harm: unless indeed he can make damaging disclosures, and then it is the facts and not the criticisms that do the mischief. On the other hand the statesman cannot injure the journalist, short of suppressing him altogether: and that in a free country, unless the journalist has acted like a madman, he dare not do.

It is Gardiner's sensitive emotionalism which gives to his very best work the touch of positive genius. He has an occult power of divining a

man's character—occult because I doubt if he knows much about it himself or can perfectly control it. Under this influence his pen will write things that by his pure reason he can scarcely have known. The best of his portraits have an odd permanence. When the War broke out, we turned feverishly to the sketch of the Kaiser. Remember it was written at a time when the keynote of Gardiner's policy was friendship with Germany: and he had been the Kaiser's guest. There was hardly a word which, in the appallingly changed circumstances, needed to be altered. Similarly, one might have thought that when Gardiner and Lloyd George quarrelled the sketch of the latter written when the two men were, if not friends, at least close political allies would have furnished occasion to the enemy. It is not so. Through the cool flattering phrases creeps steadily the distrust and dislike of the man to whom theory was sacred for the man to whom nothing much mattered but action. The victim felt it at the time and was angry.

Gardiner's excellence as a journalist—by which I mean his power to make anything of which he wrote interesting and readable—is best shown oddly in one of his books. His "Harcourt" has been criticised as sacrificing the wit, who was incomparable, to the statesman, who was rather a bore. But his "Life of George Cadbury"

is in its way a masterpiece. George Cadbury's life was a great one: but it was hardly an exciting one, nor in the common sense romantic. In almost any other hands it would probably have been dull reading: it might easily have been made quite unreadable. Gardiner has made it as fascinating as a brilliantly told romance: once begun it is not very easy to put it down. As a sheer *tour de force*, there is no more remarkable example of his queer powers.

The best of the lesser pieces published under the pseudonym of " Alpha of the Plough " seem to me very good. Intellectuals lift their eyebrows at them, and a little snorting critic in one of the weeklies recently denounced them as concerned solely with the ordinary thoughts and moods of ordinary men. They are: and the ordinary thoughts and moods of ordinary men largely determine the course of history and are coming palpably to do so more and more directly. It would seem therefore that there was something to be said for their careful analysis and presentation by a competent and sympathetic interpreter.

The War broke Gardiner up. It changed the cheerful, bustling vigorous man for the time at any rate into a querulous pessimist. I have read an article in a German paper sneering at him because when the War broke out, he wept: and I have heard the same sneers from English lips. The

fact cannot be questioned. It is strange, but true, that when he saw the most hideous calamity that has ever befallen the human race approaching —a disaster compared with which the French Revolution was a storm in a teacup and the Black Plague a local epidemic—the man was seriously moved. But then he had been badly brought up. He had been taught to believe that government is an all but divine instrument designed to ensure "life, liberty and opportunity for the pursuit of happiness" to every man. He saw it changed into a manslaying machine, of which the efficiency was shown in the death of millions, in oppression in countless hideous forms, in the destruction for thousands upon thousands of all that made life worth while for them. Perhaps too in his curious semi-prophetic way he saw something else which few at the time saw: that the result of all the chatter about liberty would be that men for a generation or more would come to turn in revulsion from its very name: and that in the squalid history of the War and its aftermath, the fires of the faith in which he believed, founded on the strange superstition that man is naturally good, would burn very low. He saw not only his own policy irretrievably ruined: he saw the temple towards which he had so faithfully prayed deserted and despised.

And it was so. Gladstonian Liberalism has

never really recovered from the War: and in the new temple which the Ezras and Nehemiahs of Manchester and elsewhere have been raising with so stubborn a courage Gardiner does not, I think, take a very great interest. He dislikes economics: he hates the labour of doing sums: and from tasks which he dislikes he shrinks with an almost feminine disgust and aversion, founded on a sound instinct, for he does them ill. Social reform, moreover, was always to him, I think, a by-product of formal Liberalism: like Lord Oxford, his leader, he was moved intellectually rather than sentimentally by the spectacle of the miseries and humiliations of poverty. If the treaty made between him and Massingham and Masterman to go over to Labour together in certain circumstances had ever been implemented, Masterman alone would have been tolerably at home in his new political quarters. He alone was prepared to cry with Herr Teuffelsdröck: "The cause of the poor in God's name and if necessary the Devil's." Gardiner and Massingham would have refused the toast, not because they thought it blasphemous, but because they thought it nonsense.

It seems to me easy to defend his tears: much less easy to defend his post-War attitude when, soured and embittered by personal disappointments and private animosities, he seemed to turn into a kind of Solomon Eagle, a mere crier of woe

in the streets. But indeed he was left a political Ishmael: there was no longer any rest for the sole of his foot. Latterly he has found rest on the broad bosom of American democracy. America was always his spiritual home. Lincoln was his first idol and Woodrow Wilson his last. With Wilson he was indeed on terms almost of personal friendship. Wilson cabled to him through House for his advice as to whether he should come to Europe after the War: and it would have been well for Wilson and for the world if he had followed the advice given. Gardiner's lecturing tours in America have been extraordinarily successful: the spiritual atmosphere of America suits him admirably. For America is in these respects a generation behind Europe. The fires of Puritanism are still burning there fiercely, and men still debate earnestly the formulas of freedom. This is Gardiner's natural air. Here I think events have latterly rather outstripped his philosophy: and there is nothing more transient as there are few things more indefinite than a journalist's personal influence. It says much for the greatest personal force in the journalism—as distinct of course from the newspaper management—of our day that it is still felt : and that there are thousands still to whom his name is the name of a prophet. They are not entirely wrong.

# LORD MELCHETT

*"To what end, Reb Josef Süss?"*

FEUCHTWANGER.

LORD MELCHETT'S politics are like those silly riddles that have no answer. Yesterday he was a Liberal. To-day he is styled a Conservative. To-morrow there is no real reason why he should not proclaim himself some mild form of Socialist. For the names mean nothing to him: and one is consequently as good as another. His cynicism is so very crude that it is doubtful whether it has really done anything material to lower the undoubtedly sinking temperature of our political morality. It is almost meaningless to call a cheat a man who quite openly and blandly breaks all the rules and defies all the conventions of the game: for the moral reproach in the accusation of cheating lies in the implied duplicity: and here there is no duplicity. Lord Melchett changes his party, and refuses to resign the seat which he won under other colours, before all Israel and before the sun. No one is deceived, least of all he himself, as to the character

of his action. Doubtless if every one acted like that, the game would come to an end. Sensitive men could have nothing to do with it, and sensible men would decline to play any longer: it would not be worth playing. But for that very reason it is not likely that many people will follow Lord Melchett's example.

To Lord Melchett politics are just a childish game which for some mysterious reason grown-up children like to play, and in which real grown-ups like himself occasionally take a patient hand. It is not certain that they were really much more than this even to Mr. Disraeli: the difference is that Mr. Disraeli found the game fascinating and absorbing, and Lord Melchett finds it always rather silly and sometimes rather boring. But he plays his hand patiently, if now and again a little wearily: only occasionally interjecting a grown-up comment such as "In regard to the Safeguarding Act, certainly it will have the effect of raising prices: that is the object of it. If it does not do that, there would be no point in it"; or again "No economist can deny that a reduction of rates must inevitably lead to an increase of land values. This is not a question which one can argue about. It is a fact." He is probably always a little astonished when the children, seeing their little castles in the air all knocked to pieces in this ruthless way, grow angry or weep.

For Lord Melchett believes that two and two make four. He believed this when he was Sir Alfred Mond. He has always believed it. And it is not likely that he realises how rare a faith it is, or how unpopular. His reason tells him that people who appear to deny it either in word or act are (unless they are lunatics) pretending. In fact, of course, they are not. They are quite in earnest: a circumstance which must be a perpetual inexplicable mystification to minds like Lord Melchett's.

The tortuous and rather squalid lane which is his politics leads to a very large and, from many points of view, noble mansion. His politics are the least part of Lord Melchett, and it would be unfair and indeed absurd to judge him by them alone. No one but an expert can speak intelligently of his technical skill in his craft: but it is admittedly superb. "Gas! I'll give 'em gas" he is reported to have said after the German gas attack on the Canadians: and he was as good as his word. In the now lengthening list of "The Men Who Won the War" it is certain that Lord Melchett's name must stand very high. His firms supplied three-quarters of the nitrate of ammonia used by the British during the War: besides the glycerine and the cordite, the gas, the gas masks and the nickel. But for their output and research work, the late Lord

Moulton declared, Britain could not have carried on the War. His own incomparable organising capacity was only less valuable.

But his triumphs as a financier began rather than ended with the end of the War. Of these too, only the expert can speak with profit. The monuments of his tireless financial labours stand in the gigantic combine known as Imperial Chemicals, with its capital of £65,000,000: and in the Finance Company of Great Britain and America, the most remarkable of the post-War triumphs of cosmopolitan finance. The mere size of these vast concerns dulls the imagination: as I have heard travellers say that the Rockies are unimpressive as scenery from their very bulk. It is difficult for the ordinary mind to entertain with any clearness the amount of detail work which must have gone to their creation: the brain which formed them is hidden under the very size of the enormous creatures which it has fashioned. Yet it is possible vaguely to apprehend the brilliance of the clear cool imagination which could dream such dreams, and the tremendous power of the relentless industry and inexhaustible patience and resource which has translated the dream into sober fact. It must further be admitted, I think, that the realisation of these ambitious schemes has been on the whole an undoubted benefit to the world in which they

were realised. There are manifest dangers in commercial combinations: but the danger which threatened the post-War world—and which threatens it still—was certainly not the danger of too great centralisation either in industry or in politics.

Not all his financial triumphs, however, even taking them altogether, will rescue Lord Melchett's name from oblivion; if these be the whole tale then he may live for a time in his creatures, but hardly otherwise. His hope of immortality rests in his latest and most surprising activities as an industrial peace-maker. Machiavelli has observed that two things are necessary for a political coup—the opportunity and the man. The Strike provided the opportunity. It broke the fanatical fighting spirit of Labour: it forced even capable and experienced Left Wing leaders, like Mr. Citrine, to recognise that "Socialism in our time" is a mirage: and to set to work actively—or at least to be willing to do so—to make what can be made out of the present system. At the same time the employers, certain Pharaohs like Sir Allan Smith apart, recognised under the pressure of the extreme danger of the position that the old order was definitely gone and the old interpretation of the rights of property definitely and permanently obsolete.

With the opportunity appeared the man in the

person of Lord Melchett: so rich, that he could afford to sweep on one side the little points in the profit and loss account on which humbler employers are apt to haggle vainly: a cosmopolitan, to whom the prejudices on the one side and the other which so often cloud and embitter industrial disputes were altogether meaningless: a practical man with an unrivalled knowledge of commercial and industrial conditions and possibilities: and yet a man of keen imagination, extraordinarily resourceful in seizing and using for his purpose the most unlikely and unpromising material. Whether this Moses will really lead the people into the promised land, or will be forced, like his predecessor, to delegate the task, remains to be seen. He has tried, with a steady tenacious patience which no abuse could ruffle and no disappointment turn from its goal. Even if he fail, it will be remembered, and rightly, to his honour. The Atlas himself remains: queerly small and disproportionate to the eye beneath the huge burden he carries. Physically, Lord Melchett defies caricature. Sitting in a theatre once, the lady next me seized my arm with a convulsive "What's that?" It was the silhouette of Lord Melchett, cast gigantic upon the drop scene, as he pottered, in his cool self-confident way, to his seat amid the chattering audience. He has humour, and can laugh at himself; he

loves a good story hardly less than a fine painting. His longer speeches are apt to be rather dull, pretentious and of little value: but at ease in company which suits him he can pour out the riches of his vast knowledge, seasoned with a certain gruff good-humoured cynicism, in impromptu torrents which are the admiration of his hearers.

The thing which makes him seem so much smaller than his work is the uncertainty of its inspiration. Lord Melchett himself would reply, officially so to speak, "Patriotism." It is not perhaps cynical to retort that he has become so accustomed to talking with his tongue in his cheek that he no longer knows when it is there. He is probably quite serious: for even that clear hard mind must have its illusions: life without any at all would be too shadowless a wilderness to be endurable. Yet it can hardly be self-interest, for he has all that man can well desire: and it is difficult to believe it the lust of fame, which is rarely overpowering with men of his type. The most plausible explanation of the motive of his public-spirited labours is that it is a kind of instinct, born partly from the scientist's unquenchable curiosity (for in his own field he is of course a considerable scientist) and partly from the business man's itch to do well and thoroughly a piece of work which he sees to be necessary.

There is a kind of nobility in his labours, for they have a sort of disinterestedness: of second rate nobility, perhaps, if one must be nice to mark and to analyse motives: but still of nobility, a thing not so common that one can afford to complain of its quality. Let us honour capacity wherever we find it; ore is ore, though it be embedded in the strangest alloy.

> "*When Baptists could go to Balliol, what Spurgeon called primitive Christianity tended to become as obsolete as the more open worship of the Devil.*"
>
> HERBERT PAUL.

NO one could possibly call him a handsome man. To see him pushing in his headlong, lumbering, impulsive manner through Cambridge streets is to realise in part the vision of Dominie Sampson. But no one could deny that he is a learned man. Apart from his professorships, his books are his witness, and a proud one. "The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire" is a work that no one can despise, however profoundly he may differ from its author's point of view. The defence of Tertullian in it is a characteristic example of Dr. Glover's defiant, bull-like courage. "Democracy in the Ancient World" has the root of the whole matter in it: and "Herodotus" seems to me one of the very best of all the popular works on the classics that have streamed from the press of late years.

It is the Dr. Glover of "Herodotus" that I personally like and admire. The boyishness

which is the most distinctive part of his character is here pure again. For the Greeks of the heroic and even of the classical age were, like the Elizabethan English, boys at heart. Not since Kingsley, who succeeded so oddly where far greater scholars failed, has their outlook been so simple and sincerely realised as it is by Dr. Glover.

"There lay Cos, full in view, two hours sail away, and all the Cyclades were out beyond it, each with a tale to tell, and the mainland of Greece. Farther off lay the lands of wonder, Scythia where feathers fell from the sky, and away beyond it were eaters of men and men with goats' feet and men who slept for six months—tales which travel might lead a man to doubt, "credible to another, to me not": and southward lay Egypt, true enough, where the one river overflowed instead of drying up, and the lizards grew to the size of nightmares: and eastward "all the fairest things are in the ends of the earth."

It is nonsense to say that a man who can write like that cannot write. It is gorgeous stuff: and behind the gorgeousness there is simple truth.

Yet the Dr. Glover that Dr. Glover himself really likes is not, I suspect, the Hellenist nor the Public Orator of Cambridge nor the sage on whose lips Canadian and American youth have

hung entranced: but the President of the Baptist Union, the pillar of Protestantism, the Hammer of Rome. He is a most formidable controversialist, so lusty a fighter that the milder Baptists shuddered a little timidly when he became their President. It is always a little uncertain where the blows of his stout English quarterstaff will fall next, and he hits so very hard and his victims scream so loudly. The old devil-worship of Spurgeon the Professor of course has put behind him: it is intellectually impossible. But you may catch an occasional glint of the Hell fires in the vein of sternness which runs through all the rough jollity and Pleasant-Sunday-Afternoon comradeship. "Easy forgiveness means cheap morality." It is clearly true: but there is a touch of the boy's hardness in the refrain. With the Fundamentalist, on the other hand, Dr. Glover fights in his customary forthright manner. To the American Fundamentalist who talked forty languages, the Public Orator replied with tart boyish rudeness that his Latin was rotten anyway. He really is a very bonny fighter: and even the disinterested spectator must admire the heartiness with which he throws himself into the battle for the sheer joy of the thing.

"The Jesus of the Gospel is an impertinence in the Roman system. The Reformers saw it, and chose Jesus. The Catholic knows it, and

chooses the Church, and he is angry with the Modernists because, in plain language, they have 'given the show away' and told the truth about the Church. The issue cannot be too clearly or too often put."

It certainly can scarcely be put more positively or more aggressively. And there is some virtue in the challenge. The hot angry boy indignantly defending his hero—for that is what it really comes to—is a not unsympathetic figure: and, as the Prayer Book controversy proved startlingly, a surprisingly large proportion of Englishmen even to-day sympathise with Dr. Glover in this matter and accept his point of view, only a little less pugnaciously. On the other hand there are times when the sage appears to the onlooker to be simply an ill-mannered theological hobbledehoy calling names in mere boisterousness.

"Whichever thimble you touch, the pea is not there: Romanism (like Hinduism) is always elusive: nothing is what it really implies: and reason becomes a dodge to let you be reckless alike of fact and reason."

Is that anything more than calling names? I doubt it. It seems nothing but the offensive noises which the scornful schoolboy makes behind the back of the venerable old gentleman whom he happens to dislike, inquiring of him where he procured that particular form of head-gear.

To the indifferent onlooker, this battle is as bewildering as it is interesting. It is a quarrel between a bull and an eagle: neither can really get at the other so long as they stick to their proper elements. While Dr. Glover is ramping around on the solid ground of commonsense, the Catholic eagle can do nothing to him. All that Father Knox himself can say is that Catholicism is more logical (which does not really mean more reasonable): and that in the long last the bull needs air too, as well as earth to stamp upon, and quite as much as the eagle. Similarly, so long as the eagle remains in the air the bull can do nothing but look up at it and snort. There is not really any more ground for believing in the infallibility of human reason than in the infallibility of the Pope. There may be worlds, as John Stuart Mill long ago pointed out, in which two and two do not make four: they are not our worlds: that does not prove that they do not exist. The reason has on the whole clearly failed, after a pretty good run, to explain the mystery of life. It cannot be criminal to try another key, if only to see what, if anything, will happen. Dr. Glover himself does not live spiritually by pure reason. If he did, he would be a mere prey to the kites and crows of Positivism and Rationalism. There Father Knox is right.

The trouble is that neither party will, nor

perhaps can, cleave entirely to its own element. For that reason the contest seems likely in one form or another to go on more or less for ever. Every now and again the Protestant bull lifts up his head in what is in effect (snort as he may) an act of faith; and at once the eagle is at his eyes. Every now and again the eagle descends upon the earth and begins delicately to suggest that there may be some ground in reason for belief in the alleged miracles of Henry VI., for instance: and then the bull is after him like lightning. He will scarcely escape without loss of feathers. It is not improbable, I think, that the angels, looking down on both combatants, smile behind their wings: but they smile gently. Mr. Belloc, much as it will annoy Dr. Glover, seems to have summed up on this occasion very well.

"I really beg your pardon," said the Padre Eterno, when he saw the importance attached to these little creatures, "I am sire they are worthy of the very fullest attention and" (he added, for he was sorry to have offended), "how sensible they seem, Michael! There they go, buying and selling and sailing and driving and wiving and riding and dancing and singing and the rest of it; indeed, they are most practical, business-like and satisfactory little beings. But I notice one odd thing. Here and there are some not doing as the rest, but throwing themselves into all manner of attitudes, making the most extra-

ordinary sounds and clothing themselves in the quaintest of garments. What is the meaning of that ? "

" Sire ! " cried St. Michael in a voice which shook the architraves of heaven, " they are worshipping you ! "

" Oh ! they are worshipping me ! Well that is the most sensible thing I have heard of them yet, and I altogether commend them."

That being so, is it for us to examine too nicely how they do it ?

# MR. H. M. TOMLINSON

*" He seemeth elvyssh by his contenance,*
*For unto no wight doth he daliaunce."*

CHAUCER.

"TOMLINSON," said my friend, as we passed the moonlit Law Courts at 1 o'clock on a spring morning, twenty-five years ago, " is the best writer of English of all the men who are at present contributing to the Press." I agreed then: and it is satisfactory to see that a large and rapidly growing public is beginning to agree now. I understand that his books are becoming popular even in America (but can that be on account of their English?). If so, it is possible in the abstract that Mr. Tomlinson may die a rich man. I say in the abstract, for no one who does not know Tomlinson can imagine how incredible it is in the concrete. It is easier to imagine the late Lord Curzon selling matches in the gutter than Tomlinson lording it in Mayfair.

The enormous time which it has taken all but a very small public to realise the extraordinary beauty of his glittering prose is due no doubt to various causes. His own shy, modest personality

may have had something to do with it. The War, which crushed so much literary talent to death, had probably more. The way of the intellectual —or even any one suspected of being intellectual— is hard in the midst of the present vast half-educated reading public. But in part the length of his journeying in the wilderness where the unknown wander has been the result of a real limitation.

He is extraordinarily individual; more so than any man I have ever met in the flesh. He looks at life, like the rest of us, through his own window only: but it is in his case such a very odd window; it is so strangely situated and the lights in it are so vivid that it is not quite so surprising as it seems that many humdrum stay-at-home people have hesitated to look through it: or having given perhaps one hasty furtive glance have turned frightened away.

The comparison with Conrad is obvious and has been drawn many times. Both are seafaring men with the right tang of the sea in their best writing as hardly any writer has had it before: both have beautiful rather artificial styles, clearly the product in each case of years of hard reading and incessant practice: and yet it is their essential simplicity and naturalness shining marvellously through their jewelled styles which gives to each his value: without this they would be almost

nothing. But is not the contrast at least as marked as the likeness after all? Read Conrad, and you find yourself reading the work of a sailor-man who, by some miracle, has learnt to write like a literary genius. Read Tomlinson and you are reading the adventures, physical or spiritual or both, of a literary man of genius who has by some odd accident wandered into the seafaring life and become absolutely acclimatised to it, so that it is second nature to him. Second nature, but still only second: with Conrad there is no other. Take Conrad out of sight of the sea and, for me at any rate, the wings of his genius droop at once and are soon dragging, soiled and weary, in the city dust or mud. That is not so with Tomlinson. He is not the miracle, as a stylist, that the French-speaking Polish ship-captain (he never could speak English well) became—a stylist so perfect that even the flaws in the writing, an occasional odd foreign usage or word or turn of phrase, seem themselves beauties. Tomlinson has lovely passages which enchant the ear and a wealth of imagery as accurately chiselled as it is gorgeous; but there is nothing in his work to equal "Typhoon." That is but to say that "Typhoon" has very rarely been equalled on its own plane by any one at all. On the other hand Tomlinson is not, like his great rival, tied permanently to the sea. Conrad's sea

pieces are so incomparably superior to the Russian stories, for instance, that it is not quite easy to recognise the same hand in them; one seems a very bad parody of the other, apeing the style, and losing almost utterly the spirit. But Tomlinson's sea pieces are not very decisively superior to his mining pieces or his forest pictures; some indeed would give the palm to the latter. That is not to allow enough, I think, for the rarer merit of the sea pieces; but it shows how near a thing it is.

His intense individualism and his passion for the under-dog have been the driving forces of some of his finest writing. Some of the descriptions which he wrote as a reporter of mining accidents still seem to me the best things of their kind ever done; the sentences are aflame with the pity for the sorrowful estate of the poor and the miserable which burns so fiercely in his own heart.

But they have also been a weakness. They made him (much as it angers him to say so) not a good war correspondent. Men had no time—no, nor even women—to look, in the heart of that fierce struggle, through Mr. Tomlinson's window: and Tomlinson can see through no other. I am a little doubtful whether his fierce zeal for social reform has not done something to check as well as something to forward the causes for which he

crusades so passionately. It leads him at times into the merely tiresome trick of the Bellocs and the Chestertons: the mechanical dodge of extolling times past for virtues which did not exist in them in order to condemn more effectively evils in the present day which, in the exaggerated form in which they are stated, do not exist in them either. It is a hard cant which says that because the slum baby playing in the gutter is happy, and even the grown children chattering and quarrelling in the slum ale-house are in their way happy too, therefore the slum is a very tolerable social institution, and it is only meddlesome idealism which seeks to destroy it. But the slum baby is undeniably happy in its way; so often is the slum dweller; and their relative contentment is one of the great difficulties and perplexities of the practical reformer. I remember Charles Masterman telling me that one of his great difficulties in fighting an East End constituency was presented by the women who flocked about him, saying, "Are you going to turn us out of our homes?"

Mr. Tomlinson is wrong in supposing the slum dweller to be as a rule inordinately miserable; he is fantastically wrong in conceiving that he feels as Mr. Tomlinson himself would feel if he were condemned to live in a slum. It is horrible that in civilised communities such social condi-

tions should continue to exist: it is odious that men should be found willing to make money out of their continuance: but to suggest that the slum is a place of torture (which in fact, to those who dwell there, it is not) deliberately devised by avarice (when most slums are a perplexity and a sorrow of heart to their owners) is to darken counsel.

I am not satisfied that these moral fervours do not injuriously affect Tomlinson's æsthetic judgments. The mere sight of a "distressed area" makes his blood boil. A mining valley near Cardiff reminds him of "the place of torment once visited by Dante." The Glasgow tenements fill him with a most just horror, as they have many good men before and since. They would "sicken a savage who had the freedom of a beach," he cries. Parts of North Shields seem to him "inferior as a dwelling place to the *nasbah* of Algiers."

It is all very just. He does well to be angry. But his sympathy with savagery seems to lay him open to a retort. He has a fine description elsewhere of the ascent of a volcano in Malaya. It is a splendid piece of writing: the scene as you read rises before you—and it seems remarkably like "the place of torment once visited by Dante." The odd thing is that Mr. Tomlinson clearly likes this scenery in Malaya: he describes it with un-

mistakable gusto. In Wales he had found the " place of torment " a mere abomination.

He has a certain tenderness even for a mangrove swamp. I have never seen a mangrove swamp, and it may be very romantic. But if I had to choose between even a Glasgow slum and a mangrove swamp, I should plump for the slum. I should be more confident of my ability to get out of it.

These however are but spots on the sun, neither very large nor very important. They have scarcely any reference to the being whom few who have met will ever forget again: who seems a stranger in all companies and yet in all at home and never out of place. He moves with his " elvyssh contenance " among his fellows like a kind of enchanted child with a child's freshness of mind and keen perception of the immense importance of the tiniest details, and a child's sensitiveness and power of passionate grief and wild delight: but with a power also of conveying them all which no child ever possessed. He seems always to be a traveller, never continuing anywhere in one stay; suddenly at some unexpected corner you meet him: and you have the feeling even as you talk with him that he is really on his way to some incredibly remote destination, and will be miles away in the next hour or two; you would not be much astonished if he vanished

before your eyes, so unreal, so eerie is his presence.

And indeed his kingdom is " over the hills and far away ": a dream kingdom which only his pen can make visible to human eyes. This is the Mr. Tomlinson at whom the orang-utan looked out in the forests of Sumatra: and who saw the violet crabs crawling upon the beach of Malaya. And some of them had legs of a pale blue . . . a pale blue . . . The vision vanishes even while you look at it.

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